AN AMERICAN ABELARD & HELOISE



MARY IVES TODD

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125

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Fine

A Merry Christmas and a Happy
New Year to you my Dear
Dear Friend Mrs. Clara S.
Ellis!

Mary Ives Todd

1904.

AUTOGRAPH EDITION

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AN AMERICAN ABELARD AND HELOISE

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AN AMERICAN
Abelard & Heloise

A LOVE STORY

By

MARY IVES TODD

"If some new element is not introduced into America, the life of the Republic will soon terminate."

HERBERT SPENCER



THE GRAFTON PRESS
New York

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AFFECTIONATELY *inscribed to all who believe that justice is a higher virtue than charity, and that the tendency of one is to elevate mankind and of the other to degrade it.*

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CHAPTER I
THE PASTOR AND HIS FLOCK



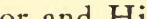
"THERE is another self to every life,
For all things must be dual to be one."

Luscombe Searelle.

CIVILIZATION must keep pace with the advance of woman.— *M. I. T.*

I

The Pastor and His Flock



IT is difficult to describe the Rev. Abel Allen, of Boston, adored by the women of his flock and held in high esteem by the men. It is difficult to bring his personality clearly before the reader, for he looked quite differently at different times and on different occasions. It is easy, however, to give a fair impression of his normal working aspect, as he paces up and down his study or seats himself to jot down the result of his reflections. He is tall and a man of fine presence, notwithstanding a very perceptible stoop in his shoulders, pale and somewhat sunken cheeks and an air of melancholy. Though he has but lately passed his thirtieth birthday, his black hair has already a sprinkling of gray in its heavy folds, while his brown eyes are a little sunken in their sockets and wholly without fire in their glance.

Seeing him thus, one could scarcely believe that this serious man had been madly in love in the past with a girl quite unworthy of him; while as for the present or for the future,—well, let it suffice to say here that not a woman

of his congregation but would have been ready to swear that her minister was as immune, in respect to what certain religious writers have termed carnal love, as an aged Roman Catholic priest.

One word concerning this episode of the past, since it was still bearing fruit. It happened when Abel was assiduously encouraging the growth of a delicate but picturesque mustache, and entertaining hopes that he might one day be President of the United States, as the time for him to deposit his first vote was near. The bit of pink femininity, who made all sorts of eyes with a facility which soon captured Abel's heart, was not in the least in love with her victim. Indeed, no sooner had she reduced the young tyro to a state of adoring imbecility than she up and married a "saner man." At least that is the way Abel excused the pretty, capricious creature to whom he played the part of devoted slave until she tired of the sport — until she brought the man she really loved to her feet.

Betrayed, wounded nigh unto death, desperate and overwhelmed with black despair, Abel drifted one evening into a revival meeting. The preacher was telling the people of God's love for lost souls, how He had sent His only begotten Son into the world to save those who knew not which way to turn. Ah, that meant *him;* for was he not bewildered, distracted,

ready to blow his brains out if some measure of relief did not come quickly to save him? It was only necessary for the preacher to finish his appeal by repeating the enticing words of Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—Abel went forward among the "mourners," and flung himself on his knees.

This act produced a great sensation. A week before he had been present with "his girl," and they had poked fun the entire evening at what they considered the imbecility of the proceedings. Now he was the humblest of the humble, the sincerest of the sincere, the most importunate of those who pleaded for salvation. Certainly he believed in a hell, he was already suffering its torments. Perhaps somewhere there was a Saviour and a heaven.

Being of an extremely conscientious and grateful disposition, Abel had no sooner experienced the joy attendant upon self-renunciation and spiritual communion with a Higher Spirit, and felt himself "saved in Christ," than he determined to devote his life to the saving of other lost souls.

In this work he had been singularly successful, and scores had been gathered into the fold of the gentle Shepherd under the persuasive influence of his magnetic glance and eloquent tongue. Everywhere he went women, espe-

cially, were his eager followers and devoted assistants. The fact that he belonged to the opposite sex seemed never to present itself to their minds, any more than it did to the women who followed Christ about.

Of course, it could not be affirmed that he regarded each member of his flock with precisely the same emotion, but it could be said with truth that he loved them according to their necessities; those who were in the sorest need received the most attention and sympathy and were oftenest in his prayers, and when Providence had relieved them, new distressed ones would take their places in his heart.

And now this minister, who for a decade had been overflowing with the love of Christ and His followers, and filled only with zeal for lost souls, had been seized with a love as potent as it was personal, as absorbing as it was unexpected. What effect was this new love to have on his life? The first, mad and mistaken as it had seemed, had yet been the means of bringing him to the foot of the Cross. Whither would this new love carry him?

After their first meeting, at the bedside of her father, who was very ill, Abel could not recall whether Heloise Mills was blonde or brunette, tall or short, thick or thin. He was only conscious of feeling a little disappointed that she had been so chary of her glances and her speech,

for they both had had the effect upon him of fine music. It did not occur to him, either then or afterwards, that there was danger ahead in an occasional meeting with her in the room of the sick man. And if anyone had told this sweet, innocent minister of the Gospel that the forces which make for love and marriage were expanding day by day in his soul he would have been shocked. But he found out this fact in due time, and under circumstances which gave an excellent opportunity to a multitude of people to forecast the future, had their eyes been sharp enough.

Abel had delivered his usual evening sermon to an unusually large congregation, for his people had just finished a new and commodious building and many friends and strangers had come from round about to attend the dedicatory service held that day. His text was the one which had led to his own conversion: "Come unto Me." It was a beautiful sermon, full of poetic imagery and uplifting inspiration, and gave many of his hearers glimpses of heaven. He announced the hymn, and when the congregation began to sing he seated himself, somewhat fatigued by the trying ordeals of the day.

As he glanced slowly and somewhat sadly over the congregation, for every large gathering contains many hearts which are sick, worn, and

weary, and Abel instinctively sought these, his eyes suddenly looked full into those of Heloise Mills, seated near the front, and there his glance remained, arrested, fastened, interlocked with hers, for how long Abel could never tell. And what took place while these two were gazing into each other's eyes? Abel always expressed himself as convinced that God, during those moments of sacred sweetness, was uniting the soul of Heloise with his own in an unbreakable bond of affection, and Heloise was equally unscientific. She said it seemed to her that some mysterious hand during that period of new-born delicious happiness was knitting their two selves inextricably together, that she "should never again know what it was to be lonely."

Heloise was the first to awaken from the trance of bliss. She glanced timidly around to see if others had observed them, but no one appeared to be aware that anything unusual had been taking place. Everyone, so far as she could discover by so hasty a glance, seemed to be singing with more or less heartiness, and if anyone had observed the minister's air of absorption, of aloofness from the religious exercises going forward, they had doubtless attributed it to secret communication with the indwelling Christ of his soul.

Much relieved, Heloise glanced down at the hymn-book she was sharing with another, and

began to sing. Alas, every tone she uttered was a cry of joy! She stopped short. It would never have done for her to go on, for the words were sad, and the tune melancholy, even doleful. The verses told of a world lost in sin, of a Christ who sacrified himself to save mankind, of the few who chose the narrow path leading to salvation and of the many who rejected it, bent on pursuing the broad way which leads to everlasting condemnation. And the last verse dismally urged sinners to repent or be lost forever.

The hymn finished, a moment of silence was followed by the benediction. Almost immediately afterwards a general rustle indicated the dispersion of the congregation. Quite a group of people found their way to the front in the hope of having a handshake and a few words or a loving glance from the pastor so greatly beloved by his flock.

The tenderness and the sympathy which were always present in Abel's intercourse with his people, or indeed with any one who sought his attention or aid, was usually tinged with melancholy. But to-night he seemed a new being. His fine dark eyes fairly shone with happiness, and though none could recall that he had ever laughed outright, his rare smile was now so ready, so bright, so full of joy as to cause remark.

Widow Smith was not sure she liked the change. She was a woman who nursed her disappointments with scrupulous care. Having arrived at middle age, she had a large stock of them on hand, and went about with a countenance pinched and lined by worry and unhappiness. Her marriage she never regarded as other than a failure, yet when the great anarchist, Death, suddenly removed her husband and set her free from the hated bonds, her pose as a stricken widow was no less mournful than had been her former role of neglected wife. Indeed she came oftener to her pastor's study to be prayed and condoled with after her husband's death than before that event took place. She looked upon Abel as a man of sorrows, and was accordingly not pleased with the new air of lightheartedness he exhibited as he shook her hand; and even less pleased with his words:

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Smith, we are going to make a new start, are we not? Going to rub everything off our old slates, and play it was all a mistake? Eh?"

"I don't understand you," she said severely, removing her hand, and pressing her lips tightly together.

"Don't understand me? Don't you know that you and I are very great sinners — that we choose darkness rather than light, sorrow rather than joy for our minds to gloat upon?"

As Mrs. Smith refused to unclose her lips and turned away in an uncompromising attitude, Abel gave his attention to a widow of an altogether different type. Though tired-looking, pale, even blanched — as befitted a washerwoman — yet she was happy as the day was long. With her were three children, who seemed greatly pleased to see their pastor, with the exception of Teddy, the youngest. Mrs. Merrill said eagerly:

"I've brought the children to thank you for them presents you was so good as to tek 'em."

Here she looked with some anxiety at the eldest, a girl of seven, clad in a gingham gown noticeable only on account of the beautiful manner in which it had been laundered. The little girl responded to her mother's look by repeating with care, while blushing a rosy red, "I am very much obleeged to you, sir."

The mother now glanced at her second daughter, who took up her cue as readily and seriously as the first: "I am very much obleeged to you, sir."

It was now Teddy's turn to give thanks for benefits received, but the mother had apparently experienced some drawback in coaching him for this occasion; for she bent down and said coaxingly, as she stroked his flaxen hair, "Now, Teddy dear, tell the minister as to how you are obleeged to him for the whistle he was so good as

to tek you. Please say, 'I am very much obleeged to you, sir,' — there's a dear!"

But Teddy was not to be so easily bribed. He shook his head and said stoutly, "I'ze won't. It's boke!"

"So you won't thank me, eh? You don't need to! I can get my thanks out of *you* easy enough!"

Abel grabbed the youngster off of his feet, tossed him into the air and catching him as he descended planted a kiss upon his pouting lips.

"There, we're square!" he exclaimed, as he turned the rebel over to his mother. "You shall have a new whistle, Master Teddy, if your mother tells me you are good."

The next in the group about Abel was a fine specimen of ripe old age, the Rev. John Brooks, a retired minister who had not preached, except as the spirit moved him, for more than a decade. Since the wife of his bosom had passed on to a higher sphere many years ago he had made the best of his loss; he felt, in fact, that God was taking as good care of her as he had been able to do, if not a little better. Certainly, no one enjoyed every hour of the day more than this hale and hearty old preacher, free from pecuniary embarrassment and surrounded by friends who delighted to do him honor.

He grasped Abel's hand with immense heartiness, saying as he shook it:

"You are always astonishing me with your eloquent and sympathetic treatment of Biblical truth; the effect on me is magical. I want to start right off and work miracles, like the disciples of the time of Christ! You should go far, my son, very far. Heaven has dowered you with a warm heart and a tongue of flame. But be *a little less prodigal of them* — that is the advice of a hale old man whose watchword has ever been 'Moderation.'"

"Thank you — thank you!" said Abel, with that air of cheerful deference which a devoted son accords to a beloved parent, in spite of the fact that his own ideal, the one he had chosen when converted and which he had always been faithful to, was the opposite, Christ and Him crucified.

Two young ladies, inseparable companions and devoted to church work, now offered Abel their neatly gloved hands. It was beginning to be whispered about that they were more devoted to their handsome young pastor than was really necessary, but as nearly all the women of Abel's congregation were his ardent followers, it was unbecoming to single out any special members for envious comment.

The young ladies gave place, after a few words had been exchanged, to a group of young people who lived in a suburb. They were a merry party, who were all supposed to be "en-

gaged"; a situation eminently interesting to Abel after that look into the eyes of Heloise Mills, and he entered with zest into their conversation, which did not last long, however, for there was still a goodly sized group waiting more or less patiently for a little personal attention. People may sing very zealously, "Oh, to be nothing," but few learn to put the doctrine into practice.

After the trio of engaged couples were well out of the church, Herbert Churchill, one of the number, lost no time in remarking:

"That preacher of yours, Minnie, ought to be well kicked."

Herbert was an odd mixture of sweetness and aggressiveness. His eyes were soft brown and his mouth also indicated good nature and a good heart. On the other hand his forehead showed him to be of a scientific turn of mind, while his nose was aggressively high and curved and went well with his square chin.

"How horrid of you! What do you mean?" asked his fiancée, in a vexed tone of voice.

"I mean that a man who prostitutes such rare gifts to keep alive a religion built on crude metaphysical fancies, instead of on the solid rock of science, ought to be severely dealt with."

"In the name of miracles and sweet romance, who wants any science in their religion or their

love?" inquired a young man of the group who had been listening.

"People ought to want it!" retorted Herbert, "when they think of the wonderful universe that science has revealed to mankind, in place of the vague and solitary realm presided over by a vindictive Jehovah and the subtle beast called Satan."

Two of the girls did not join in the laugh which followed this speech.

This nettled Herbert, who went on recklessly:

"The truth is that women — who might well be called the religious sex — won't have anything to do with a religion which has no Satan in it. They all secretly like Satan. It is an inherited instinct!"

Here Mary Somers, who prided herself on her scientific attainments, bluntly replied:

"Do you mean that Eve plucked the apple because she was secretly in love with Satan?"

"Exactly!"

"Why should you say that, when the Bible expressly says she took of the fruit of the forbidden tree because she saw it was good for food, pleasant to the eye and to be desired to make one wise. That ought to convince you of the fact that our mother Eve was of a scientific turn of mind. She pursued precisely the same course as her scientific sons of to-day."

"But her sons of a scientific turn refuse to be

suppressed — and they ought to be encouraged," responded Herbert with a smile. "Now, here am I, a poor devil, who has written a scientific book on love, and can't get a publisher to bring it out. Really, you girls should imitate the example of Queen Isabella — pawn or sell your jewels and give me the money, that I may enlighten the world discovered by Columbus."

"How did you write it, in the form of a novel?" asked Minnie.

"No, I should hope not! I tried to imitate Herbert Spencer in the exactness and solidity with which I —"

"If you are wise, you will rewrite it, cast it in the form of fiction and dilute it a thousand fold!" struck in Minnie.

"Make a thousand novels out of it? — oh, Lord!" groaned another young man.

After a general laugh which had been called forth had subsided, Mary Somers said in a tone of warning: "If you do succeed in finding a publisher, that will not mean sales, nor readers. Of Herbert Spencer's first work I believe but seven hundred and fifty copies were made and it took fourteen years to sell them, and nearly a third of the original subscribers to the Synthetic Philosophy forgot to pay for their parts."

Mary's remarks were followed by an ominous silence. After which the conversation degenerated into love talk of the usual babble variety.

CHAPTER II
LOVE AND DEATH



"THE abyss which parts those of different religious beliefs was yawning between them." — *Zola.*

II

Love and Death



EARLY the next morning Abel received a note from Mr. Mills begging him to be so good as to come to him as soon as possible. Abel made haste to comply with the sick man's request, as the messenger said he was much worse. Immediately upon the minister's arrival, Mr. Mills greeted him with these words:

"It is not to speak of physical ills that I desire your presence. They are of small importance in comparison with the immortal spirit, which lives forever in a state of either bliss or torment." The sick man sighed deeply and seemed unable to continue.

Abel laid his hand sympathetically on the thin hands clasped together on the coverlid, and said gently: "You seem poorly to-day. Let us not talk of anything which makes you sad. Pray wait until you are stronger."

"My mind is made up to speak to you without further loss of time, and I must proceed." Mr. Mills' tone was so firm that Abel made no further opposition, seeing that it would be useless.

"Yes — there is a new revolt in my family to be dealt with," began the sick man in tense de-

spair. "The first one I put down with a strong hand — I was not then ill, as you see me to-day. It had to do with my wife, who secretly plucked fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge, like Eve before her." He released one of his hands from the minister's palm and wiped the cold sweat from his brow.

"Let me bring you a glass of water," said Abel, rising.

Mr. Mills, having drunk a portion of the liquid, continued his narration, though with visible pain and difficulty.

"The first mutiny in my family happened in this wise: We were about to settle in a strange city, after having passed some years in traveling from place to place, as my business had required constant change of location. My desire for a settled abode was partly on account of my children, who had never gone to school. While traveling about, it had been impossible to put them in school without being separated from them. Hitherto, they had been taught by my wife, who was a good scholar and of a literary turn. Then, too, my wife enjoyed being their teacher. As she had no house to keep and no society nor church work to engage her attention, she divided her time between her children and such reading matter as she could procure. Helen — my wife — was an omnivorous reader, and could apparently discover the contents of a

book by a mere running glance through it. Having been on the wing for several years, I had not renewed our church relations from time to time, at the various places in which we found ourselves for longer or shorter periods, for the reason that I was perfectly satisfied with our old church home and place, and was always hoping to be able to return. But the years sped by, and I felt that it was but right to give our children such advantages as were to be procured in a city of goodly size and in a well-settled part of the country.

"Having chosen the locality, my next duty was to choose the church. I exercised great care in the selection of a preacher; for in these days of half-belief that is a matter of infinite importance. I decided upon a church having for its leader a man whose record was most assuring. During all the years of his ministrations he had never once been known to give his congregation any heretical surprises. His sermons on the Bible as the Word of God, on the Fall of Man, The Incarnation, the Atonement, Justification by Faith, and similar subjects, were always perfectly sound. You can guess the holy joy I felt in finding a preacher so entirely to my mind, in these degenerate days. I expected my wife to share my delight, for she knew how particular I was in this respect, but on the contrary, when I told her of my success and how I had already

given our names, she simply remarked that she was very sorry I had not first consulted with her about our new church relations, as it would have saved us all not a little annoyance. She then proceeded to give me the astounding information that she herself was no longer an orthodox believer, and therefore could not join with me another orthodox church. I was struck dumb. My tongue refused to move!"

Mr. Mills' anguish became so great that Abel handed him a strengthening cordial from a stand near the bed, and again begged him to wait until another day before proceeding with such harrowing reflections. For answer the sick man shook his head and continued his narrative as soon as he had rested a little.

"All I could do was to gaze helplessly at my lost wife — my dear Helen! When she realized that I was speechless from grief and not from anger, she threw her arms around my neck, kissed me repeatedly and wept profusely. She said: 'My dear husband, is it possible that you cannot see the hideousness of that old orthodox type of religion, how it separates people instead of uniting them? Why, it is busy digging a great pit between you and me this very minute!'

"My tongue was loosened now and I exclaimed: 'It separates people because the majority of them are so wicked they will not accept the scheme of salvation and be saved.'

"'And why are the majority so wicked that they will not accept this proffered means of salvation, if it is the right one?' she asked.

"'Because of the Fall of our first parents, in which all are implicated and which leads us to love darkness rather than light, to love Satan rather than God, and to reject the Son of God, who came down from Heaven to save such as would accept His proffered salvation,' I replied.

"She did not speak for a moment, and when she did it was with a caress and an enticing little way she had. Women, you know, can't *reason*. They only feel things. She said, 'I don't feel a bit responsible for what Adam and Eve are said to have done so long ago, — and how could it have been possible for us to fall with them, when we were not yet born?'

"I was astonished at her audacity and replied with firmness, — 'It is enough that the Word of God declares that all fell with Adam and that to be saved from eternal condemnation we must accept that salvation, for only those who will accept it can be saved. Though it is true that we did not, like Adam, have a choice as to our line of conduct in the beginning, we have a choice *now* as to whether we will accept the proffered means of salvation or not. That is quite enough.'

"'Well, yes —' she said in a hesitating manner, 'perhaps it is enough for those who believe

in the Fall of Man, but for those who, on the contrary, believe in the slow but continuous Rise of Man, it is not enough!'"

"Now, sir," continued Mr. Mills, panting for breath, "you can understand from this remark what a complete heretic my wife had become. Orthodoxy is built on the Fall. Take that away and what becomes of the scheme of salvation reared on that foundation? It falls flat. I used every means I could think of to convince my wife of the awful mistake she was making. I pleaded with her. I prayed with her and for her, day and night. We wept until our tired eyes could scarcely see. We fell ill and our children became sad and apprehensive. At length our misery was unendurable. I saw that we could not go on thus, and I became convinced that my wife would lead my children astray if she continued with them any longer. The thought of her poisoning their young minds with heterodox ideas, of her leading them into the broad road which ends in eternal damnation — or at least everlasting separation from their God and His blessed abode, and from myself who loved them so well and was in a measure responsible for them — determined me to send her to her old home and to undertake the care of the children alone."

Mr. Mills paused for breath, and gave a sign that he needed still more of the stimulant.

Abel waited patiently for the sick man to finish his sad narration, as he realized the uselessness of trying to get him to postpone it. It seemed to Abel like a deathbed confession, which one is impelled by some unseen power to make before the departure from this world.

"I finally placed my children in Christian private schools, since I found it impracticable to teach them myself."

"Did the little ones prosper?" asked Abel, after waiting some moments for him to continue.

"I can't say that they did." He paused, and then added abstractedly, "I steadfastly refused to eat of the forbidden fruit which my wife offered me. No, sir, I would not so much as touch one of the books which had led my wife astray. I abominated them and I burnt them!"

"And the children?" asked Abel again, perceiving that Mr. Mills had dropped into a painful reverie.

"No, they did not get along well. The fault lay with my wife. She had accustomed them to her ways, which lacked proper discipline. The youngest son, always a delicate lad, soon died, calling pitifully for his mamma, when he should have been calling on the name of Christ. The other ran away and has never been heard of since. My daughter Heloise — alas! it is

she who is making a mutiny now — like her mother before her."

"In what respect?" asked Abel, exhibiting keen interest, although he tried to restrain himself.

"The revolt is the same — precisely. When Heloise returned from your service last evening and had given me a synopsis of your sermon, I said to her, — 'I am getting well so fast now that by another Sunday we shall be able to join Mr. Allen's church.' I expected a ready assent. On the contrary, I not only failed to secure a ready assent, but I failed to secure even a reluctant one."

"Has Heloise up to the present been a dutiful daughter?"

"Certainly! Certainly! *up to now.* Always ready to obey my slightest command. Yes, she has been a good girl. She is of a very reticent nature, and rarely expresses her opinions. I have not seen as much of her as I could wish."

"Is Heloise a student of the Bible?"

"She reads it to me daily. Yes, she is well informed in Holy Writ, and in orthodox literature on the subject."

"Perhaps your daughter out of respect to your wishes has never read heretical books?" suggested Abel.

"As to that I can't say positively. But why should I expect a daughter to respect my wishes

when my wife, pledged to obedience to me at the marriage altar, secretly poisoned her own mind with heresy until she must needs turn against me in the most deadly manner? Alas, I fear they are alike, else why this new revolt?"

Mr. Mills paused, overcome with pain and exhaustion, and again Abel in response to a motion from him gave him some medicine.

Presently he resumed:

"The first mutiny caused the death of my wife, at least she died soon after she returned home. This second mutiny is hurrying me to mine."

"Dear brother, are you sure the two women knew they were reading heretical books? They may have been what are called scientific books, supposed to be free from religious bias, but which have the same effect on people's minds as books whose aim it is to destroy orthodoxy."

"Ah, but I *warned* them against reading the books of science, so called, just as I warned them against those of a distinctly heretical cast. No, there is no excuse for them! Women are born law-breakers, like their mother Eve, who was warned by God Himself. However, I have one consolation ever present with me."

The countenance of the sick man became animated, and a gleam of hope gave his sunken eyes a new and a last radiance.

"What is that, my dear brother?"

"Thank Heaven, I did not, with my wife, partake of the forbidden fruit! I have always accepted with all my heart the Atonement, which the fall of our first parents made necessary for the salvation of the Elect! Surely a crown is reserved for me in that eternal life of bliss to which I am hastening!" gasped the dying man, and before the minister could bring his daughter to his bedside, or even call for help, he had passed away.

When Heloise entered the room, Abel, helpless, tongue-tied, extended his arms toward her. Without an instant's hesitation she glided into them and bowed her head on his shoulder.

For several moments they stood thus in the deep silence of the death chamber, both of them stunned by the shock, profoundly sad, and yet filled with that joy which passeth all understanding.

CHAPTER III
THE BACHELOR'S APARTMENT



"THE sole purpose of the world is to provide a physical basis for the growth of spirit." — *Goethe.*

III

The Bachelor's Apartment

ABEL'S apartment of three large rooms and a "museum" combined comfort with elegance in a way which sometimes made him feel a little uneasy — it was so luxurious, and so artistic. The apartment had, however, been selected and furnished for him by the women of his congregation without his knowledge and hence without his consent.

For the adornment of these rooms nothing had seemed too good or too expensive, and to their decoration some of his congregation had contributed their very choicest art treasures. In fact, such an immense quantity of things, useful and ornamental, had poured into the place rented to receive contributions, that a strenuous committee had to be appointed to rigidly refuse such things as would not contribute either to the comfort of their beloved pastor or to the artistic beauty of the trio of rooms. The museum, a room as large as many of the poor have for living quarters for a whole family, commenced by being a store-room or "big closet," but the autocratic dictation of the committee, combined with their "superfine

taste," as some sarcastically called it, or their "idiotic meddling," as others brutally dubbed their discriminating efforts, aroused so much resentment, more particularly among those who were refused any representation at all, that finally it was agreed to turn the room into a sort of museum to which all who desired could contribute something. After that, the way little keepsakes poured into the depot was amusing, and the promptness with which the heart-burnings subsided was a relief to all concerned.

At length the three large rooms were models of order, comfort, and artistic embellishment. As for the one-time store-room, it had been metamorphosed into a well-arranged cabinet of curios and love-tokens. Naturally there followed in the wake of all this loving enterprise a grand reception given by the ladies, to which their husbands, as ignorant as Abel himself of what had been going forward, were invited. Their minister was warned not to fail to attend, as he valued his life.

Ah, what a charming comedy the women of Abel's congregation played that night of the house-warming! The men, though they responded gallantly to the invitation of the ladies, were not expecting comedy. Indeed, they were looking for a conspiracy of some kind calculated to deplete their pocket-books; hence tragedy.

The women had kept their secret well, and

the men were generally of the opinion that these elegant apartments, which they saw for the first time, belonged to a certain absentee bachelor of æsthetic taste and ample resources. Probably some woman of fertile imagination and a gift for fiction had given them a misleading scent, or it may have been that one of their own number had ventured to account for things he did not know by circulating a theory of his own built on suspicion. They were all agreed, however, that the bachelor was a fool to permit a parcel of women to hold church meetings and informal receptions in apartments so fine and artistic. Why, the women even took out his books — beautiful ones — and passed them around like sweetmeats! Then they proceeded to scribble in them or mark their infantile preferences for certain passages! The room stored, supposedly, with the fruits of the bachelor's many travels, was infested by women to such a degree that it was useless for any modest man to try and make his way thither.

The evening wore away, in apprehension for the men — as a rule — and in delight for the women.

After the refreshments, there was a call for silence. An important announcement was to be made. Then did the men in this new paradise, created by woman, quake and tremble. "Now we are in for it," "Now we must pay the

fiddler," was the expression more or less apparent on their faces — with the exception of the minister.

Though Abel chose plain and unadorned living for himself, he enjoyed seeing others happy in the possession of beautiful things, provided they came honestly by them and made good use of them. He thought the bachelor was doing a sensible thing in placing his apartment at the disposal of these good women while he was making one of his extended trips. Since God Himself had placed the world at man's disposal, why should not man give freely as he had received?

Nature had dowered Abel with an extremely artistic cast of mind, together with the heart of a poet. But he had systematically starved the art side of himself since he had become a Christian. His present sleeping-room was small and mean in appearance, though kept scrupulously clean by the poor old widow who let it at good rates to her minister. Abel prepared his sermons in the pastor's study connected with the church, which was little more than a book-filled closet with a tiny fireplace that smoked the livelong winter. And in summer the den was like a furnace.

Consequently, no one had passed with dilatory steps through the rooms of the supposed rich, touring bachelor with keener enjoyment

than orthodox Abel; indeed, words of admiration flowed from his lips, and he examined with interest everything from a rare painting by one of the modern masters down to a penwiper which was a cunning bit of art in its way.

The evening thus far had been for him a season of unalloyed enjoyment, and he looked at the woman preparing to make the announcement with mild and affectionate interest.

Usually, announcements were made by certain leading men of the church, when the minister did not make them. To-night, it was a woman, of the advanced type, of course, who was bent on usurping this prerogative of the masculine sex. She was not a dowdy. That was a distinct relief. If a woman must talk in public, she should at least be pretty, for it is not to be expected that she will say anything of an edifying nature. Even in the matter of an announcement, a man could put in two words a statement for which a woman would require twenty. These are sentiments universally held to be true by men and shared more or less by woman herself.

Needless to remark, the tall, handsome woman who at last secured attention did not share these views. She was evidently bent on making a little speech in connection with the announcement. Her first words were mostly lost, as the attention secured was of the rustling variety. At

length silence reigned and it was comparatively easy to hear her low, but distinct voice:

"... If it is the duty of our beloved pastor to attend to our spiritual needs, it is equally our duty to secure for him his material requirements. I need not call attention to the faithfulness with which he has done his part in our mutual obligations, or how neglectful in some respects we have been in ours. Some of us at last became conscious-stricken, and we have put our heads and our purses together in an endeavor to cancel some of our sins of omission. As we saw no way to enlarge the church study and make it a comfortable place for him to work, and as we found that his sleeping apartment was equally uncomfortable, we determined to obviate both defects by preparing other rooms, with what result we leave our minister and our brothers to determine; for the rooms which you have been promenading through this evening with such lively interest, are those, once bare and much the worse for wear, which we have secured, and which we have done our best to beautify and render habitable. I will only say in conclusion that if they afford our beloved pastor but a fraction of the enjoyment which we have experienced in preparing them for his use, our enterprise will be a grand success."

Whether the sprinkling of men present really enjoyed playing the part of the silent, subjective

minority cannot be accurately known. The chances are that they would have felt more natural if the announcement had contained the expected claim on their pocket-books, and the good-looking sisters had done a certain amount of begging in an artful but charming way. As it was, there was nothing for them to do but cheer their sisters over an enterprise they had had no hand in executing. This they did with a rather bad grace, and an awkward silence followed some reluctant hand-clapping.

The predicament of the minister was also a little awkward. He recalled that Christ, his Master, had been born in a manger, was reared in poverty, and during his ministry had nowhere to lay his head, excepting as his friends impulsively supplied him with a temporary resting-place. His close disciples, of whom Abel had ever striven to be one, should, he had held up to this very night, lead, like their Master, a life of unworldliness and of severe self-denial. But now the women of his congregation had prepared a sumptuous home for him! Should he accept or reject their bounty?

At this moment there flashed upon him the pretty scene which took place in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, so he began:

"Dear sisters, — I will be frank with you and admit that I have felt some reluctance in accepting your costly gift. Every man who

has read his Bible attentively, or even profane history, knows how ready the sister sex is to make costly sacrifices for those she loves, and that these sacrifices sometimes tend towards the undoing of man and the suppression of herself. . . . I doubt not that Eve plucked the forbidden fruit more because she hoped to give Adam a pleasant surprise than from the expectation of any private gain to herself. . . . Christ seems to have better understood the loving heart of woman than anyone else, for we read that he quickly forgave the sins of the woman whom Moses would have caused to be stoned, because she loved much. While as for the woman who poured the costly ointment upon His head, which His disciples thought should have been sold for the benefit of the poor, He not only did not condemn her, but actually praised her, declaring that wheresoever the Gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, this act should be spoken of as a memorial of her. These considerations lead me to believe that Christ under the present circumstances would have freely accepted the gift of a beautiful home so freely offered by women whose hearts are no less warm and generous than was that of the woman who had the alabaster box of very precious ointment. Entertaining such a belief, it is delightful for me, who try to follow in the footsteps of the Master, to

accept your costly gift in the spirit in which it is made. But if I accept these fine and artistic rooms I trust you will all enjoy them with me. Continue to hold your meetings in the reception room, as you have been doing of late, and when you want an old-fashioned sociable, like we have been having to-night, all the rooms are yours. Dear sisters, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this new proof of your kindness. May the loving Master reward and bless you!"

For a whole year the comfortable home which the women had made for him proved to be a paradise indeed, and many, many hours of innocent content had he experienced therein.

CHAPTER IV
THE MARRIAGE OF ADAM AND EVE



"THE book of Genesis is now known to be a production of a very composite character, — a compilation of fragments; and of fragments very unlike one another, both as regards subject-matter and style. These fragments were put together by an editor belonging to a late period, who was more anxious to retain and preserve all he could than to make his various fragments agree." — *Rev. John Page Hopps.*

"THE foundation stone of orthodoxy has always been the dogma of the Fall of Man and of the consequent lost and ruined condition of the race. In accordance with this theory, the one great work of religion has been to save men from their sins. . . . But study of Jewish thought and life has shown that this whole Eden story was a late importation from a pagan people. The older prophets knew nothing of it. And even Jesus, who is said to have been supernaturally sent to save us from the effects of the fall, never makes the slightest allusion to it. Besides this, science has demonstrated that man has steadily risen from the first, and it makes all stories of original perfection impossible of belief on the part of free and intelligent people.

"And thus we are now able to explain the world's evil, vice, crime, suffering and death in the light of theories much more honorable to God and more helpful for man." — *Rev. Minot J. Savage.*

The Marriage of Adam and Eve



ABEL returned to his study, after the death of Mr. Mills, with a mind not only overcome by the beauty of Heloise, but also full of pity for the unfortunate Helen, so ruthlessly robbed of her children, because she no longer believed in The Fall. He asked himself if he could have put away a wife, the mother of his children, because of a difference in religious belief. He thought not, and his heart ached as he saw in his mind's eye the lonely woman in her desolation, refusing, like another Rachel, to be comforted. He did not feel the same depth of sorrow for her husband, because he had Christ and the hope of everlasting bliss to sustain him.

With a sigh, the minister glanced about him as he sat in his armchair; and his eye fell upon a large bunch of flowers. They had been placed upon his desk during his absence. The surprise and the pleasure it gave him changed for a moment the current of his thoughts.

"Ah, how kind is the heart of woman and how often it has been trampled on," he said, half aloud, as he rose to examine the token of affection. Having inhaled the fragrance, and

reseated himself, he dropped again into a reverie, leaning his head on his hand, his elbow resting on the arm of his comfortable, well-cushioned chair.

After he had spent some time in deep and painful meditation he got up and paced backwards and forwards through his rooms, every one of which bore eloquent testimony to the generous loyalty of woman. A new and terrible conflict raged in his breast. Hitherto infidelity in the shape of vague suggestions had often flitted through his consciousness, but now it laid hold on him with a force that threatened to wreck all he had formerly held sacred. For if one did not believe in the Fall of Man, what *could* one believe in?

Since the time of his conversion, Abel had read and studied his Bible in a devout feminine spirit. He assiduously cultivated the feeling that it was not for him to reason why when reading the Word of God, but piously to accept it. Now it is one thing to read the Bible with unreasoning — and unreasonable — faith, and quite another to study it with a mind alert for truth.

He keenly realized that the mental chaos he was now in was due to the terrible shaking up he had received through the revelations of Mr. Mills. He could not throw off this domestic tragedy. Moreover, he felt that the same abyss

which had parted the father and the mother of the woman he loved was now yawning between himself and Heloise, though yet obscurely. Else why had she refused to join his church?

Abel ceased pacing up and down, hurriedly seized his Bible, sat down in his armchair and began to read it, beginning with the very first sentence, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The verses which immediately followed were delightful reading. Their refreshing largeness began to restore his balance. God had seemed to create everything in an easy, let-there-be sort of manner which was truly God-like. There was not a jarring note in the whole first chapter. Even when God had consulted with His colleagues, saying: "Let us make man in our own image after our own likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth;" there seemed not to have been the slightest difference of opinion. Man was made in the image of God, "In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

Having made them in his own image, He proceeded to bless them and to tell them to be fruitful and to multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over it, for

all was placed under man's jurisdiction. Nothing was exempted. There was apparently no string attached to anything. The very last verse of the first chapter declared that God saw everything He had made and behold it was very good, and that the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

So far, it was a succession of easy triumphs of the omnipotent skill, and when all was complete the earth had been given freely to man to subdue, replenish and control.

But when he read the second chapter Abel perceived incongruities and irreconcilable statements as never before. He recalled that he himself had been guilty of teaching his people that though it was stated in Holy Writ that God had finished the heavens and the earth and the host of them in six days, they must not understand these days to be like our own of twenty-four hours each; for each Genesis day undoubtedly meant a long period of time. The fact that these six days were described as embracing an evening and a morning each, he had gotten over in a way which might have suggest to an unbiased mind the subtlety of the serpent. Still, as it was in the interest of orthodoxy, the method could not be wrong, Abel had thought. It now struck him as a logical consequence that if each of the six Genesis days had reference to a long period of time, then the

day which followed the six, that is, the seventh day, must have reference to a long period of time also. And how did God spend the seventh day? Why, He simply rested and blessed the day because He had rested. That the Great Maker of the heavens and the earth should rest during long ages, and bless and sanctify that period on account of His taking this prodigious rest, seemed to Abel a very un-God-like proceeding. In fact, the writer of the second chapter, by telling how long God rested after having finished the earth, made Him out prodigiously lazy. Next he made Him prodigiously vain by saying that He blessed this one day, lazily spent, because in it he had rested from all His work. The second scribe also gave the demoralizing impression that for God to rest is a more holy way for Him to spend His time than for Him to work.

However, this improbability sank into insignificance when compared with others which revealed themselves as he continued to read. Evidently a scribe of an altogether different stamp from that of the person who wrote the first chapter was trying his hand in telling how God had made the heavens and the earth, one with a passion for details of a decidedly unpleasant and belittling character. If the first chapter was calculated to put man in an excellent humor with himself and his Maker, the

second seemed intended to prick the bubble of pride in this intimate sonship.

Having progressed thus far, Abel began to perceive that the second scribe had also made God shortsighted, petty, and cruel; because, to have finished making the earth and not until then to have discovered that there was not a man to till the soil was assuredly shortsighted; and after that discovery, to make but one man was petty. It also looked petty for the God who could do all things to potter over the making of a garden and to turn the man He had made into a mere tenant-gardener. Above all, it was absolutely cruel to place in the midst of this little garden a tree of magical properties, and then to command this poor, forlorn, dust-made gardener not to eat of it, for "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Abel read on with strangely increasing disgust. What an inferior conception of the Lord God the second scribe of Genesis had, to be sure! To finally discover that it was not good for the man He had made to be alone, and to attempt to remedy this defect by making out of the ground beasts and birds, only to find out that among all these creatures there was not one helpmeet for this lonesome individual, was another belittling assertion to make of a God. Why, it would have been a foregone conclusion of mere finite mind that a man would not be

satisfied with a beast or a bird for a companion! But Abel conquered his impatience. He wanted to see what effect the rest of the chapter would have upon him, now that his eyes and mind were bent on seeking truth and reason and nothing else. Very slowly, therefore, he read the verses which describe the making of Eve by the Lord God, and her presentation to Adam by their Maker, and Adam's little speech of acceptance, finishing with the assertion, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Abel was astonished that he had never noticed before how absurd and how incongruous was the little narrative of the manufacture of Eve and of her marriage to Adam. From beginning to end it was full of childish statements. It was possible of course that a third scribe was responsible for the manufacture of Eve, since she is made in a very different manner from Adam. Either the scribe who told of the making of Adam had become more inventive or still another romancer had tried his genius at the making of woman.

If so, the third writer must bear off the palm for dramatic details. As a preliminary to the making of woman, poor, lone Adam was put into a deep sleep, so deep that the Lord God could with impunity open his side, break off one of his ribs and close up the flesh, without Adam's being aware of the operation. Out of this

single rib the Lord God proceeded to make a woman, and when He achieved this feat He brought her to Adam, who must have been awake, for he at once made a nice, but rather curious marital speech: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man!" The question arose in Abel's mind — who told Adam that the Lord God had taken a rib from him while he was asleep, and did the informant add that God had also removed some of his flesh? It would seem so, for Adam labored under the delusion that Eve was likewise flesh of his flesh; whereas she was merely bone of his bone. Adam's further statement that, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife," Abel thought premature, seeing there was no mother or father on either side, and consequently none to leave.

Abel now reached the third, and fatal, chapter of Genesis. He felt his heart beat violently. This chapter had never been attractive to him, but he realized its importance, being well aware that if Ezra had not seen fit to insert this fragment — this short and exceedingly dramatic story by some unknown writer — into the Bible, which he had put together about 450 B.C., and wherein he allowed himself to play the double part of compiler and editor, there would have

been no orthodoxy such as the world has struggled under for several centuries. Therefore Abel thought that the third chapter called for most careful scrutiny by anyone anxious for the stability of the religion built on the Fall of Man.

It opened by calling attention to the serpent, which the writer — or dramatist — declares was more subtle than any beast the Lord God had made. Was it a beast? Did the Lord God make it at the time he made the other beasts, and if so, why was no mention made of a creature so potent as to be able to cope with God Himself? Evidently the beast — if beast it was — was not only gifted with speech, but with intuition and knowledge of a scientific nature. Else why had he been able to make himself perfectly understood in conversation with Eve? Why did he ask if they were permitted to eat of every tree in the garden, if he had not already divined the truth? And when Eve had communicated to him the knowledge that the use of one tree was prohibited them, with the warning that if they ate of it they should surely die; why did he assure her they would not die after eating of it, if he had no knowledge as to whether the tree produced good or bad fruit?

Assuredly the creature called the serpent was in some respects better informed than the one whom the dramatist calls the Lord God. Adam

and Eve did not die after eating of the forbidden tree, which fact Abel had heretofore accounted for by saying that they had died a spiritual death. But now Abel found himself asking, how was it that Adam and Eve could have sinned so wofully in partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, if the Lord God had created them so blind and stupid that they could not distinguish good from evil? To be sure, the account was very conflicting, since in verse six the scribe declares that when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband and he did eat. While in the very next verse, it states that the eyes of both of them were opened — thus intimating they had been blind before they ate of the forbidden fruit. Yet this story, puzzling as it is, so puzzling that more than one reader has marveled whether its author may not have been a subtle joker, has probably been fraught with more consequences to the human family, for good or evil, than any story ever told.

Abel paused some moments before proceeding further. He wondered what there was about this little account of the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge to have made such a tremendous impression and have had such a wonderful influence on the most advanced peoples

of the world. Surely there must be some admixture of truth in it. What is it? Can it be possible that mankind are at heart cowards in respect to the acceptance of new truth, and like to hug the delusion to their breasts that to pluck from the tree of knowledge is a God-forbidden thing bringing death in its wake?

And here the vision of his own deacons rose before Abel's mind. Suppose he should suggest to them that it would be well to revise their hoary creed and the articles of faith — what kind of a reception would the suggestion receive? The very idea gave him a sort of vertigo. He felt so ill that he put his Bible down, took his hat, and walked out into the open air.

Zola has somewhere said that "One cannot yet require of children and women the bitter heroism of reason." Ah, but is the sterner sex yet eager to practise the bitter heroism of reason? With his deacons in mind, Abel had no delusions on that score.

CHAPTER V
THE HEROISM OF REASON



"Not always can flowers, pearls, poetry, protestations, nor even home in another heart, content the awful soul that dwells in clay. It arouses itself at last from these endearments, as toys, and puts on the harness, and aspires to vast and universal aims." — *Emerson.*

If each home were a small republic in which equality had been established at the start, — the marriage altar, — an act of simple justice to the two human beings concerned, it must follow as day the night that justice will find its way throughout the length and breadth of our fair land, and that then and only then will our big sham republic become The Great American Republic, beloved and respected by all the nations of the earth. — *M. I. T.*

"Love covereth all sins."

V

The Heroism of Reason



HAD not delicacy battled with Abel's feelings, he would have proposed marriage to Heloise at once. When he did call, a few days after the funeral of her father, she was not at home. Then he concluded he would better propose to her by letter. He was haunted by the feeling that she would refuse to marry him, and if so, she would be likely to give her reasons. If she sent these to him in writing, he could consider them more carefully in the privacy of his study than would be possible if he were unduly excited by her presence.

His letter ran as follows:

Heloise, my beloved!

Thank God, your eyes confessed a few days ago what your lips might never have admitted. You love me! I know it! Else why that long, grave, steadfast look of serene content, when our eyes happened to meet?

Confess, sweetheart! — you thought my mind was so full of the needs of my people, of God and His great desire to be one with His creatures, that you could refresh your heart without fear of consequences. You thought that at church human love gave way to

divine. Perhaps it does when people are old, but when a man is young and falls in love — Heaven only knows how! — with a maid, and the maid with him, it is dangerous for these two to exchange glances anywhere in God's universe. Yes, I feel sure of it! — sure that the God of Love is likely to do just what He has done with us — constrain the two chosen ones to gaze into each other's eyes until their hearts are inextricably welded together. Ah, what bliss to be joined in wedlock by God Himself!

And now, my beautiful Heloise, I must urge that, "what therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder." You shall, if it so pleases you, continue to learn of Darwin and his disciples, while I hope you will not object to my remaining a follower of the humble, loving Nazarene. He is still for me the most attractive of teachers.

Heloise! Let me hear quickly if you will be mine in the sight of man, as you are already in the sight of God. Ever your own

ABEL.

Abel awaited a response to his letter with keen impatience. He hoped that a reply might come by the trusty messenger who had carried his missive to her, and that he would thus be saved some hours of torturing anxiety. But the messenger returned empty-handed, saying that the young lady had merely thanked him and dismissed him with the remark that she would not keep him waiting, as she could not reply immediately. That meant refusal! Abel was

sure of it. He wanted to fly at once to Heloise and stop her mouth with kisses — to defy her objections. But he reflected that such hot impatience might destroy all of his hopes. He had here to deal with a girl whose father was a Scotchman of the most unyielding type, and whose mother had had a will equally strong. He must go slow — keep cool — endeavor to reason. In the struggle that was at hand Abel realized that his passionate heart, his eloquent tongue, would avail him nothing; he was face to face with the "heroism of reason."

At length her reply came. He tore open the envelope and read with a sinking heart:

Abelard, dearest:

I am sure you will not mind if I call you Abelard, since my name is Heloise; and since, too, the same reason is parting us which parted those faithful lovers, so dear to every romantic heart.

Yes, the religion of disunion is still with us, and still actively at work. Dear Abelard, when you ask me not to let man put asunder what God hath joined together you overlook the fact that the creed you preach does put asunder the man and the woman, while pretending to unite them. Its spoken vows in the ceremony of matrimony raise the man on a pedestal while they pledge the woman to lifelong vassalage to the being thus artificially set above her. On this account the feeling of oneness which lovers are cognizant of — if truly united by God — must at the

orthodox marriage altar receive a deadly chill; and the unequal position they assume give rise to a thousand misunderstandings — if not to incalculable suffering and virulent hatred.

Dear Abelard, *because* I regard the real marriage of myself with yourself a holy act, too holy to be besmirched with falsehood, I shall be far away when you read these lines; far as to physical presence, but ever with you in loving sympathy and oneness of spirit.

Yes, dear Abelard, it is best that I should go. Even if it were possible for me to accept the orthodox marriage rite, I could not fill the place I ought to fill as the wife of an orthodox minister.

Perhaps you do not know how heterodox I am, since a good many disciples of modern science retain their places in orthodox churches. How they manage to sit on two stools so far apart is past my comprehension. I cannot assume what I do not feel. But let me give you an idea of my heterodoxy and perhaps you will find my going away easier to bear.

I will begin by frankly admitting that I now read what you doubtless look upon as the Word of God more to see what religious people have believed in the past than to see what I ought to believe in the present. I do not believe in the Fall of Man in the beginning, hence reject the Atonement. How could man fall at the start? Since — as a rule — there is no such thing as continuous punishment in this world for past wrong-doing, what reason have we for believing that there is everlasting punishment in any other world of God's universe? I think that we shall be reasonably happy anywhere so long as we

faithfully seek the Right and do it. Micah sums up his idea of religion by asking: "What does the Lord require of thee but to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

But what *is* Right, what *is* Justice, what *is* Mercy, and what does it mean to walk humbly with thy God? To answer these questions, your religion teaches you to go to the Bible and accept its standards, forgetting that the righteousness, the justice, the mercy, and the very gods of the people of the past are outgrown.

For me the doctrine that bids me escape the burden of my own sins by casting them on another is not only cowardly but immoral. It is contrary to universal law and to individual experience.

Those who clamor for a new religion are right! They are wrong only when they suggest that it be *invented*. The failure of old orthodoxy to satisfy modern man lies in the fact that it is an invented religion. The Fall was invented, the curse that followed it was invented. Then came the master invention of the Scheme of Salvation; preparing an everlasting paradise for the few, while leaving the great majority to everlasting torment — a religious concept which could only be held by men who had not yet awakened to a glimmering sense of the brotherhood of man.

Then came Christ, who sought to spread a higher ethical sense among his followers. But the autocratic "Fathers of the Church" found Christ too human, too *womanly*, so they doctored Him!

I am aware that your love of Christ is of a very ideal nature, and that you hold Him up to your people in a very helpful and inspiring manner. At the same

time I hope that you will do your part towards giving us what we need so much — a new religion — one based upon the enlightened sense and growing needs of man and woman, rather than on subtle fancies which rob God of wisdom, dignity and justice.

Dear Abelard, do not feel sad that I am going away — for I am not really gone. Only my body will be traveling around somewhere or other when you receive this letter. My real self is with you!

Dearest, believe me to be

Very truly yours HELOISE.

Abel had no sooner finished reading this letter than he seized his hat and great coat, intent on rushing to the house which had lately been the home of Heloise. The landlady must know something of her future movements, and he must know as quickly as possible all that she knew, at least.

On his threshold he was stopped by a cabman often employed by some of the members of his church.

"Well, Tom, what is it?" Abel asked rather impatiently.

"Mrs. Symonds is pretty bad, sir. She wants you, if it is not troubling you too much, to come to her right away, sir — if you will be so good."

"I will go without delay," answered Abel, after mentally ejaculating to himself, "Thank Heaven, it is not a wedding!"

"Is she much worse?" he asked as he descended the steps.

"She has been going down hill very fast since you called a month ago."

"Ah, is it so long since I called? I have been very remiss in my duty as a pastor," said Abel with a deep sigh.

"People knows as how busy you must be with the funerals and marriages and the meetin's and the visitin's," ventured Tom, noticing that the cheek of the minister was a little more sunken than when he had last seen him.

"Yes, that is true, but the sick should not be neglected," replied the conscience-stricken Abel.

As he entered the bedroom Mrs. Symonds exclaimed:

"Oh, how good of you to come at once! I felt that I *must* see you."

"Don't tell me you are worse!" exclaimed Abel, clasping the woman's outstretched hand warmly in his own. "We cannot do without you."

"No? Sit down! I have something to tell you, Mr. Allen. You know what a matter-of-fact person I have always been — a veritable Martha?"

The minister nodded his head.

"With a temperament phlegmatic rather than flighty or impressionable?"

Again the minister nodded his head, wondering why she was preparing the way so carefully.

"Also, I have the reputation of being a truthful person — have I not?"

"Most decidedly!"

"Uncomfortably truthful sometimes?" pursued Mrs. Symonds.

"I am well aware that you are one of those rare people who 'cannot brook the shadow of a lie,'" gallantly admitted Abel.

"Well, I am going to be very blunt with you right now, although I know you will not approve of what I have been doing or intend to do. But, before I confess, please read these three letters which I have received to-day. They are from very responsible people."

Abel took the letters from the excited woman, and as he looked at them, the expression of his countenance grew very grave.

While he read, Mrs. Symonds closed her heavy, grief-worn eyes and remained mute. She was a large woman, with the broad brow of an organizer, yet not handsome. She had given but little thought to dress and society, but since she had "gotten religion," she had been the recognized leader among the women of her church. She had one son who had gone west to make his fortune, and had promised to send for his mother as soon as his circumstances would permit. Two years had passed by since he had bidden her good-by, radiant with youth

and ambition. During the first year his letters were hopeful, but the second year, they were less frequent and sometimes very depressing. He was evidently passing through a great strain of some kind, although he wrote no bad news.

"My dear Mrs. Symonds, why did you not tell me of your horrible suffering before this? To have kept all that is revealed in these letters pent up within your breast for so long!—ah! no wonder you have been ill!" He seated himself by the suffering woman, taking her cold hands in his, but in truth he was at his wits' end. He could think of nothing to say calculated to cheer a woman, and a mother, whose sufferings were of the nature of Mrs. Symonds. After a moment of deep silence, she herself broke it by saying:

"I see you dare not offer me any consolation."

"Only God can heal a soul so fearfully stricken as yours has been," was Abel's rather evasive reply.

"*Your* God — with his everlasting hell?"

Abel was silent.

After waiting a moment for him to speak, Mrs. Symonds continued:

"No, I did not send for you to-day expecting to obtain any help, and, as for your God, I want nothing more to do with Him!"

Abel was still silent.

"When I came to myself, after the fainting

spell which the telegram announcing my son's suicide threw me into, and when I realized that I had to live — I am one of those women who are as hard to kill as a cat — I began to wonder where I could look for a little comfort to still the torment in which I found myself. The very thought that there was a possibility of my son being in hell made life hideous for me. I soon reached the conclusion that it was useless to appeal to any of the people of my own church — those in authority, I mean. You all believe — or pretend to believe — in everlasting punishment for those who do not accept the Scheme of Salvation, and my son was a free-thinker, like his father before him. There is one woman among your members who is not at all orthodox, I happen to know — but who still continues to attend your meetings because she likes you very much indeed. I also happened to know that she had been dabbling in spiritualism! I went to her and told her about the telegram, which merely stated that my son had taken his life. I asked her if she could refer me to a medium who might possibly give me some particulars. She told me of a man with a wonderful gift; she said he was a seer like those described in the Bible. She begged me not to speak of him as gifted in this respect to anybody, as he was not a professional medium, and he feared it would hurt his business if it got out that there

was anything abnormal about him. She further said that he was a Catholic and very devout. I asked her to arrange a meeting between us and she consented to do so.

"He came to me the very next day and sat in the chair you are now occupying. I told him of the telegram and that I wished him to give me the particulars of my son's suicide, and to see if he could tell me what had become of the immortal soul of my poor boy. He bowed his head, then looked steadfastly upward and presently began to describe the manner in which my son had released himself from his body, repeating the sad exclamations addressed to my son by a companion — one of the three who were with him immediately after the terrible act had been committed — while he lay dying. Next he told me that he saw my son's spiritual self among the happy souls and that he looked peaceful and content."

"Did he describe your son's death as the writers of these three letters have done?"

"The details are exactly the same."

"And were the words addressed to your son by his companion given correctly?"

"Word for word!"

"Um — I see these letters do not state the cause of your son's suicide. Was the seer more explicit?"

"No. My son had thought best not to tell

me of his trouble, and I would not ask. Sometimes I think there was a woman at the bottom of it! Some frivolous, heartless creature who leads men on —"

As she spoke a servant entered and rather reluctantly announced that a young woman in deep mourning had just arrived in a carriage, and that she insisted upon seeing Mrs. Symonds at once, as she had news of her son.

The sick woman sat up in her bed, dazed, and in a hollow voice ordered her admitted at once. She apparently did not hear the protests of Abel, who feared a shock, and who wanted to offer to retire during the interview if she insisted upon receiving the visitor.

Scarcely had the maid left the room when the door opened and a girl of twenty flew to the bedside. She was evidently a lady, handsome in feature and attractive in appearance, and yet—oh, so wretchedly worn and wan! She seemed not to see the minister as he rose and stepped back, but pushed his chair aside and impulsively knelt down beside the bed, and clasped Mrs. Symonds' hand in hers.

At first her words were so intermingled with sobs that it was almost impossible to understand her. But gradually she spoke more coherently.

"Yes — it is I who am the cause of your son's death! — I who loved him better than life itself! This is the way it happened. He fell in love

with me — I am sure of it — now when it is too late — and I with him. Our happiness was perfect — at least mine was! — until in the midst of it one of my friends told me that my lover was still engaged to a lovely girl in the east. That he really loved her and only made love to me because I was an heiress, and he saw no other way of supporting his true love and his mother, to whom he was very devoted. Well, I thought I found out — that it was true — what I now know was false! — and I became mad with jealousy. I not only refused to see him again but followed some mischievous advice. I let another man make furious love to me, and I accepted him. The marriage day was quickly set. We were to have been married the very hour that your son — only I became so deadly ill that the marriage had to be postponed. But in the meantime your son —!" Unable to go on, the young woman buried her face in the bedclothes and wept aloud.

Mrs. Symonds, who had been regarding the stranger with a hard, grim countenance, felt the tears rush to her eyes, the first which had visited them since she had received the telegram. One short, sharp, hard wrestle with her soul and it was all over. Almost involuntarily she put her hand tenderly on the bowed head and said, "My dear daughter!"

All this time Abel had been standing in the

background, not knowing whether to stay or to go, a totally useless and unobserved fragment of humanity. He made up his mind to steal quietly away; for he, too, had a love affair which was not going smoothly. He slipped out without attracting attention, and as he closed the door softly after him he saw that the two women were fast locked in each other's arms.

CHAPTER VI
IN ANDROMEDA



"THREE things I hate," said Tolstoy to me, "autocracy, orthodoxy, and militarism, and these are the pillars of the Russian State."

"THE world of Andromeda is decidedly an inferior one. To give you an idea of the poor mental caliber of its inhabitants, I will cite two examples, selecting the subjects of religion and politics, as they are generally the best criticisms of the value of a people. In religion, in place of seeking God in nature, and of basing their judgment on science, instead of aspiring to the truth, and of using their eyes to see and their reason to comprehend — in a word, in place of establishing the foundations of their philosophy upon knowledge as exact as possible of the order which governs the world — they are divided into sects, who are voluntarily blind, and believe they render homage to their pretended God by ceasing to reason, and think they adore Him in maintaining that their anthill is unique in space; by reciting phrases, and in injuring other sects . . . and in authorizing massacre and wars. Their doctrines contain assertions which seem expressly imagined to outrage common sense. These are precisely those which constitute the articles of their faith and belief!" — *Camille Flammarion, in "Lumen."*

VI

In Andromeda

AS soon as he left Mrs. Symonds', Abel lost no time in finding his way to the house where Heloise and her father had been boarding for several months. It was a high, brick building, with little to distinguish it from the rest of the houses in the block, but to Abel it was invested with a sacred charm of so transcendent a nature that he found himself trembling as he rang the door-bell.

A servant opened the door, and in response to his inquiry for the mistress led him into "the best room," where he seated himself in an arm-chair, which was comfortable, but not ornamental.

The room was like the chair. Luxury was nowhere, but comfort everywhere. Abel stepped to the book-case and glanced over the rows of books, not that he particularly cared what was read by the people of the house, but because he wished to appear at his ease when the sharp-eyed landlady should rush in upon him — for he knew that her black eyes were like needles and her tongue a two-edged sword There was not a book in the library that was

not of the most approved religious texture, while the magazines and papers on the center table were of similar quality. He wondered how Heloise had managed to stray so far from the church; for her father, doubtless, had always surrounded her with just such an atmosphere. It was unaccountable—as unaccountable as the sudden appearance of the subtle beast in the paradise of Eden.

Ah, but how he loved her, this strange Heloise! He must discover her whereabouts at any cost; then he would decide what next to do. He loved her almost to idolatry, but truth compelled him to realize that he also feared her.

The door opened and the landlady appeared with very red eyes. "You must excuse me," she made haste to say, as they seated themselves, "for looking so done up. We have had a double loss, first the father, and then the daughter."

"What do you mean?" asked Abel quickly, turning very pale and revealing at once his interest in Heloise, which the landlady already suspected, and which he had intended to conceal.

"Well, I mean it's the same as two funerals — only the loss of the daughter is a thousand times the harder to bear!"

"Then Miss Mills is not —?" said the minister with a sigh of relief.

"She is dead to us," interrupted Mrs. Brookes, "for we shall, I fear, never see her again. She has gone such a long way off. I never in my life took such a liking to a woman, young or old! Usually I don't like my own sex for boarders; they are always underfoot, trying to save a few pennies by doing a bit of washing or cooking something on the sly, and they always want a lot of waiting on. Oh, the fights I've had with them has made an old woman of me before my time! But in these days, when it's hard to get boarders, you can't always be particular. You must take what's to be got, if you're going to make ends meet. If I could pick and choose, I'd room and board only young men belonging to my own church. As it is I'm glad to get anybody, occasionally — just so they are not infidels! I *do* draw the line there. Not that they could hurt *me!* I have long been settled in my belief, but they might injure my children, who have already given me a heap of trouble. You see they go to the public school and pick up a lot of trash which is called science nowadays, and they ask me a lot of questions — until I shut them up and tell them they ought to be ashamed of themselves and to go to the Word of God for the knowledge which is not of man's making, and therefore not to man's undoing."

"Do they seem inclined to take your advice? Do they love their Bibles?" asked Abel, won-

dering how he could turn the conversation into a channel which would give him the information he sought, without showing how much he desired it.

"Not as they should, I'm sorry to say. Why, when I was a girl we learned verses by the hundreds, and had large portions of the New Testament on our tongues' end, and we got religion early and walked the safe and narrow path without stumbling. I was ready to die when I was six years old. My conversion was an uncommonly clear one; the minister said so. My children are everyone of them older than I was then, and not *one* of them is sure of being in the ark of safety. They only say when I question them that, 'They hope so.' They ought to be *sure*, hadn't they?"

Mrs. Brookes stilled her tireless tongue for a moment while she gave Abel a piercing look of inquiry. She was of the thin, bony type of New Englander. Though not far past forty years of age, her face was covered with a network of wrinkles, and she was already quite gray.

"We live in an age when people question much and believe little," replied Abel, with a sigh. "Our children are the product of the times, which admit infallibility nowhere, not even in the Bible. But you must have found Deacon Mills a man after your own heart?"

Abel actually smiled at his crude effort to switch the conversation on to the track on which he desired it to travel.

"So far as *religion* is concerned, he was all right — but as a man I didn't like him. He beat me down whenever he could, and if it had not been for the generosity of Miss Mills, I should have done a good deal of work for them for almost nothing. She said her father meant all right, but that he did not know the worth of woman's work. So every week she paid me some extra money."

"Has she money of her own?"

"I doubt if she has much. Her father gave her an allowance, and as she spent little on herself, she always seemed to be flush where other people were concerned. In fact, she was an elegant person to live with; but I always had my doubts as to whether she was altogether sound in the faith."

"Why?"

"Well, I asked her one day if she was as good a Christian as her father, and she said it was hard to compare two Christians so utterly different; that he was an autocratic Christian, whereas she was a democratic Christian; that he was good of his kind, and she hoped to be able to prove in time that she was good of her kind. Now, what *is* a democratic Christian, Mr. Allen? I asked Miss Mills to please explain

it to me, but just then her father called her and as he died the very next day, we were all so broken up afterwards that I forgot to find out."

"Oh, there are many kinds of Christians and many sects," said Abel evasively; "and I suppose, now that women are becoming so learned, we shall have still more. Usually Christianity is based on the Fall of Man and salvation through the Atonement. Possibly Miss Mills may base her kind on the equality of man before the law and the equality of man and woman in marriage — and thus be able to call it democratic — a name usually monopolized by politics."

"I don't think it's nice to associate a nasty party name with anything religious. Politics is only another name for greed, while Christianity ought to stand for just the opposite — for love of God and one's neighbor. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I think so," admitted Abel. "I fear though that Christian people are no less greedy than others. It is refreshing to hear that Miss Mills is an exception. You say she was pleasant to live with?"

"I said it and I mean it! Usually people who board with me impose on me and my help as much as they dare, or if they don't do that, their conduct is of the patronizing sort which makes one feel like spitting in their faces. She

treated me as if she thought I was as good as herself, if not a little better. My children and the servants adored her. She was embodied sunshine. You felt her presence in the room even when you did not turn around to warm yourself in her smile. She never put a thing out of place, and she handled my books and things as if they were her own. I never had any one in the house so easy to get on with.

"But if I had guessed that she was not sound in the faith, I would never have let her step foot in my house! — on account of the children, you know. An unorthodox Christian is a dangerous person to have around the house. But how was I to tell? Her father was a man of long prayers and she knelt by his side morning and evening, and listened to him with the face of an angel. I really could not have had the patience she did, for he was mortal long, and sometimes loud when he got excited; and you know yourself there's work to do as well as praying. Then the books she used to read to him! All orthodox! I don't see how she could do that if she didn't believe what she read. My! but she was odd in other ways, too!"

"How?" asked Abel quickly, greedy to extract every bit of information that it was possible to obtain.

"Well, it's odd for a woman naturally beauti-

ful to try and hide her beauty under a bushel, as it were. Now, there's her hair, so abundant and full of life and of a lovely golden brown shade — what does Miss Mills do every morning but comb it straight back off her forehead — and do it up in a tight knob at the back of her head. You ought to see it at night when she combs it out before going to bed! Why, it's so full of electricity, such a mass of shining waves, acting like they were glad to be free, that not one of us has been able to resist the temptation to ask her to let us comb it out for her. Of course her eyes nothing can spoil, not even the tears which come reluctantly to them, as if they realized they had no business there. No, she was born to shed light and be adored. With her hair down she reminded me of that picture in her room that she called the Madonna of the Grand Dook. But when I told her she must get married and have a chubby darling and then let an artist paint her, so we could have a beautiful Madonna of our own, she laughed so gaily that I could not make her out; and when I asked her what there was so funny about my suggestion, she said she was amused by the idea that a good-looking young woman must be married as a preliminary to becoming a Madonna. I asked her if all of the Madonnas had got their fine, handsome children without being married, and she said that she thought that may have

been the case. She did not laugh again, though, for she saw how dreadfully shocked I was."

"But where has this beautiful Miss Mills flown?" said Abel. "You have excited my curiosity by saying that you never expect to see her again, because she has gone so far away."

"She has gone — or started to go — to the opposite side of the world!"

Abel's heart sank like lead in his breast, and he paled perceptibly. Mrs. Brookes was beginning to feel uneasy over the length of his stay, just when she had so many things to do, and did not notice the effect of her words, but in her hurry to be about her own affairs, she became quite explicit and concise in her replies, for her.

"She has gone to the Pacific coast, to a place called Los Angeles. She will pursue her calling there, which is that of a nurse. I suppose I should say scientific nurse, for she was taught at a college and trained in a hospital. I asked her why she did not choose to be a doctor instead of a nurse, and she said that it was her father's desire that she should be a nurse. He thought it was a more feminine calling, for nurses are subject to the doctors and women ought always to be in subjection to men. St. Paul himself couldn't beat Mr. Mills on *that* point!"

"Why did Miss Mills go to Los Angeles?

Has she relatives there?" asked Abel, amused in spite of himself.

"I think not, but if you would like to read about the place you can take some pamphlets and books which she left for us. My work crowds me so that Heaven only knows when *I* shall get time to read them!"

At this broad hint Abel rose to go, and with a look of relief Mrs. Brookes procured for him from the adjoining room the packet of printed matter about the Pacific coast and its principal cities "on the other side of the world."

CHAPTER VII
THE SONG OF THE WEST



"THROUGHOUT history, the nations, races, and classes which found themselves strongest, either in muscles, in riches, or in military discipline, have conquered and held in subjection the rest." — *Mrs. John Stuart Mill.*

"AND thy great future! O it is to me,
Like some enchanted vision that doth hold
My fancy captive."

Eliza A. Otis.

VII

The Song of the West

WHY had Heloise gone from the coast of the Atlantic to the coast of the Pacific, from the Athens on one side of America to the Athens on the other side?

Abel sat himself down in his luxurious den and endeavored to find out, if possible, the answer to this question. The hour was late, but that was in his favor. He could be reasonably secure from interruption until nine o'clock the next morning.

Heloise had gone away asking for a new religion, a religion which recognized, among other things, the equality of the sexes at the marriage altar. Was she likely to find it in California? Abel had never heard that the West, so far as America was concerned, was more advanced in its religious conceptions than the East. He was aware that in respect to the political equality of the sexes the West was decidedly ahead of the East, but surely the old simon-pure orthodoxy was as rampant on one ocean as on the other — and, for that matter, all the way between.

At this point in his meditations he suddenly

recalled some remarks Heloise had made to him about the coming greatness of the Pacific-West. She had said that she believed that its development would be as much more glorious than that of the Atlantic-East as sunlight was more luminous than moonlight; that the greatness of the eastern half of America was of the Anglo-Hebraic order, which had flowered into an autocratic aristocracy of millionaires, whereas she felt sure the greatness of the opposite side of America would be of a unique and wonderful kind, on account of the advance in the position of woman. She held that in order to produce a new type of civilization, a truly great people, instead of great aristocracies as heretofore, each sex must contribute its quota of Divinity.

But why had not Heloise gone to Colorado, where the equality of the sexes had made still more progress? Abel could not think of an answer to this question, and he began to search through the books and pamphlets in an attempt to solve the mystery.

First he glanced through a big volume, a book of travels by Ludwig Verner Helms. There were two chapters devoted to California, one of which had evidently been carefully read, as the pages were marked here and there by faint pencil strokes. Abel contented himself with reading merely the marked passages. The chapter described the early settlement of Cali-

fornia, after Cortez had discovered and explored Lower California in 1534, with the help of Franciscan missionaries. The missionaries were all men without family ties and wedded of course to the advancement of the Catholic Church. Priests went among the natives with a sword in one hand and the Cross in the other; and to such good purpose did they wield the one and exercise the other that by the end of the eighteenth century the whole country was practically under their rule. While they gave the savages a more settled form of life and some conception of Christian morality and fellowship, they deprived them of all ideas of liberty and all powers of initiative. In their hands the Indians became mere docile agricultural serfs.

As Abel read of the methods which these priests used to effect conversions he wondered what Heloise thought about the process. It was man's forceful way of doing things, but could woman have suggested a better one under the circumstances? Abel thought not, but he smiled as he read the account of Captain Bushby, who visited one of the missions and watched the metamorphose of savages into Christians. The dusky inhabitants of California, robed in blankets, were placed in a row and made to kneel by an Alcade whose business it was to maintain order. Their tutor was, in this instance, a blind Indian who understood their

dialect. Having arranged themselves in their proper kneeling postures and become perfectly still, the priest began:

"'Santissima Trinidada: Dios, Jesu Christo, Espirito Santo,' pausing between each name to listen if the simple Indians — who had never spoken a Spanish word before — pronounced these words correctly, or anywhere near the mark. After they had repeated the names satisfactorily, their blind tutor, after a pause, said 'Santos,' and recapitulated the names of a great many saints, which finished the morning's tuition. . . . If, as not unfrequently happens, any of the captured Indians show repugnance to conversion, it is the practice to imprison them for a few days and then to allow them to breathe a little fresh air in a little walk around the mission, in order that they may observe the happy mode of life of their converted countrymen, after which they are again shut up, and thus continue incarcerated until they declare their readiness to renounce the religion of their forefathers. As might be believed, the ceremonial exercises of the pure Catholic religion occupy a considerable share of the time of these people; masses are performed twice daily, besides on high days and holidays, when the ceremonies are much grander and of longer duration. And at all the performances every Indian is obliged to attend, under the penalty of whipping; and the same method of enforcing proper discipline, as in kneeling at proper times, keeping silence, etc., is not excluded from the church service itself. In the aisles and passages of the church, zealous beadles of the converted race are stationed, armed with sundry weapons of potent in-

fluence in effecting silence and attention, which are not sparingly used on the refractory and inattentive. These consist of sticks and whips, long goads, etc., and they are not idle in the hands of the officials that sway them."

Thus were the natives of California "converted" to the religion of the gentle Jesus.

The second chapter, entitled "California Revisited," contained no pencil strokes and therefore its leaves were quickly turned, Abel merely noticing the frequent repetition of the suggestive word "mines." In this hurried review Abel did not once observe the word "priest." Evidently "another spirit was abroad, offering on the shrines of Mammon."

As Abel lifted up the second big book he groaned. He was very tired and it seemed to him it weighed as much as half a dozen other books. He glanced at the number of pages — seven hundred and thirty-eight! The title was "The New Pacific," by Hubert Howe Bancroft. It contained no pictures and only one map. In this map the Pacific Ocean held the place of honor; indeed, it appeared to be the real picture, the land simply acting as a sort of framework for it. Abel's eyes quickly caught the words: "Los Angeles," in large black type — evidently its fortunes were linked with those of the great Pacific Ocean. Almost directly op-

posite it, across the Pacific, he saw the word "Pekin." One city belonged to the newest civilization of the times, the other was the capital of the oldest. What effect was the one to have on the other?

Abel paused for a moment to consider, but his precious time was passing and he hurried on. He looked over the table of contents and it suggested to him that the war with Spain had somehow given the United States a new feeling in regard to the Pacific, but there was no preface by which he could arrive at a short cut as to what was the nature of this new feeling. He must therefore glance more or less over the pages of this big book in order to find out. Oh, if Heloise had only put in some of her dainty marks to give him a clue! But although he had again and again turned the leaves he had failed to find so much as a tiny cross or dot. With rapid glance he absorbed the first eight pages, perceiving the book to be as full of information as an egg is of meat. When he reached the ninth and read a few lines he set it down with a laugh, saying to himself, "Ah! How to obtain commercial supremacy! that is its sum and substance."

The lines which caused Abel to lay the book down were innocent enough; only they were out of his field of vision. They had to do with the

material prosperity of the race, whereas he was always thinking of its spiritual welfare.

"Nearly one-half the human race live in countries bordering on the Pacific Ocean; the number will soon be more than one-half. What does that mean for the United States? One-half the inhabitants of the earth within quick and easy reach from our western coast! Cheap, safe, comfortable, and rapid transit, as we have seen, may now be had from every part to every part of the Pacific islands and mainland, and from the borders inland facilities are daily increasing. If Americans will rise to the situation, and put forth their intelligence, energy and enterprise, they can feel assured of an industrial conquest such as has never before been seen."

It was the old story over again, thought Abel. Conquest rather than enlightened co-operation was to be the aim of this new world, as it had been of the old; and subjection, if not a new type of slavery, was as ever to be the fate of the mass of the people, in spite of public schools, colleges, newspapers, and an army of preachers!

"Verily the Millennium is still a long way off," he sighed.

The books and pamphlets on Los Angeles now received Abel's attention. In these he hoped to trace the true motive of Heloise's choice of the "City of the Angels."

Abel was pained to see that in some of the smaller books commercialism was as rampant,

as evidently the central theme, and the keynote of their teachings, as was the case with other books on California that he had seen. Works of this kind did not detain him long, and as he could discover no marks from the hand of Heloise, he turned to the pamphlets. He picked up the largest one first, and found that what he had supposed to be a pamphlet of abnormal size was a New Year's number of a Los Angeles newspaper. The cover was decorated with a rural scene, in the foreground of which was a fine specimen of stalwart manhood in picturesque attire. On one shoulder he carried with easy grace a long-handled shovel and a hoe. In his right hand was a canteen of water, doubtless just filled from the irrigating stream he was leaving behind him. In the background were birds and flowers, fields and trees, and sunny skies.

Turning over the leaf, Abel perceived a rose-crowned woman clad in flowing garments. She held in her out-stretched arms a basket laden with fruit — grapes, bananas, peaches, and pears. On one side of her in the foreground reposed an artistically arranged heap of vegetables. In the background was a barrel. The frame of the picture was studded, not with diamonds and precious stones, but with long bearded heads of wheat, while underneath was written "Abundance."

This picture occupied the upper half of the first page. On the lower was a poem entitled "In the Land of the Sun." Abel was sure Heloise had read this poem, because in one stanza the word "Empire" had been crossed out and the word "Freedom" substituted in her easy, graceful handwriting. It originally stood thus:

"Oh, it is near, so near,
The wondrous Future of this land of ours,
And Empire-shod, and promise-crowned I see
No shadow darken its grand destiny."

Heloise's correction was in Abel's eyes a great improvement, and he re-read the last two lines, aloud, substituting the word "Freedom" for "Empire."

Turning the leaf, he glanced at the article entitled "The Pleiades of the Republic," having reference to the seven southern counties of California. It was written in a very laudatory manner, and possibly it was all true, but Abel was less interested in the seven Pleiades of the Republic than in the probably uncountable likes and dislikes of one woman, so he contented himself with reading the portions that were distinguished from the rest by pencil strokes, or in which the word "home" was underlined.

"The very foundation of American civilization is the *home*, and here, under the sunniest of skies, in the most balmy of airs and under the most pleasurable

conditions throughout, an intelligent, care-taking and industrious people have built *homes* that are characteristic alike of the spirit of culture in our midst and of the beautiful country in which they are planted. . . ."

"There's newspaper English for you!" said Abel.

"In these pages may be seen pictured bits of desert which have been transformed from forbidding wastes, through the touch of labor, into beautiful orchards, smiling with voluptuous beauty; odorous gardens that spill fragrance as from a chalice, and *homes* in which civilization is seen at its very best. . . ."

"More 'fine writing'!" he commented.

"And all these things have been accomplished by the man with the hoe. He has set his implement of labor at the root of the sage bush and the ragweed, and where these vagrants of the fields once grew in insouciance there has sprung up the rose-tree, the flaming poinsetta, or that beautiful thing we call the orange, which bears its perfumed flower and its perfect fruit on the same branch. With his trusty implement, backed by brawn and the spirit of intelligence, he has led the waters of the rivers away from their natural courses and spread them along foot-hill and valley alike, until Nature laughs in very exuberance and riots in bounteous fecundity. He has harnessed the mountain to the dynamo, and led along a slender thread of copper the subtle current which propels the trolley-car and illuminates the *home* and the highway alike. With the same instrument of husbandry he has terraced the foot-hills and trans-

formed them into slopes of beauty. He has leveled the hill, and thereon builded for himself, the sweet wife and the little ones, a *home* in which happiness, contentment and culture are in abundant evidence; and here the man with the hoe does his own thinking, and that on as lofty a plane as the most exalted of his countrymen or the nobility of any other country. Such, then, is the life of the man with the hoe in the beauteous region which lies about this City of the Angels."

Abel laid down the paper. He seemed to be suffocating. He arose and threw open a window, standing before it in order to inhale the fresh, cool breeze. He knew it was absurd, but the truth is — he was jealous — jealous of the man with the hoe! He was not aware that Heloise knew any man of the description just given, but she would meet him and she would fall in love with him. Already the man with the hoe was the man of her dreams! And she had taken this long trip to meet him and she would marry him, in that free and easy California way, and share his home, bear his children — and be forever lost to her rightful lover. Abel began to pace the floor, tortured by the cruel, subtle, unreasoning and unreasonable monster.

How little it takes to make even a good man jealous!

CHAPTER VIII

"HOME, SWEET HOME"



"SHE (*the Western woman*) calls her house 'home' oftener than is done in the East, and these homes bespeak the finer taste of the woman. Her education is likely to be more virile than that of her Eastern sisters, because it is acquired at schools and colleges where co-education of the sexes is the rule. Her domination in the home and her primacy in the higher life, as we are inclined to call it, are seen not only in the more obvious social affairs, but in the element of seriousness which marks most life in this midway of the country." — *Henry Loomis Nelson.*

VIII

"Home, Sweet Home"



PRESENTLY Abel reseated himself, determined to see what else this abnormally large newspaper had to relate about the man with the hoe. He found no tell-tale pencil marks either on the remainder of page two or on three. He turned the leaf and saw that the next two pages were profusely illustrated, but, thank heaven, there was no man with the hoe! On the top of page four he read, "A Life in the Open Air," and the pictures without exception had to do with people having a fine time out of doors. Some were happy in fields, others were having "Fun in the Pacific," merrily disporting in the arms of the biggest ocean of the globe. On page five was "A Christmas Party in Southern California," enjoying themselves outside their house instead of inside, as would have been the case on the Atlantic coast. The last picture represented "A Rose-Geranium in January," which was literally covered with blossoms and extended from the bottom of a pretty cottage to the very roof, partly embracing a dormer window it had found there, besides luxuriously surrounding the large one below.

A gentleman was seated at his ease outside of the cottage, quite near the ambitious geranium. A lady decorated with flowers was handing the man, presumably her husband, a small bouquet.

"It looks as if it were the custom of the country to avoid the inside of one's house," commented Abel to himself. The next moment he perceived a faint line and saw the word "home" in two places, underlined as usual. He read:

"A country *home* in Southern California, under judicious management, may not only be made a thing of beauty and a joy forever, but may also be made to yield its owner a good income. . . . Besides all these attractions and advantages Southern California is a land of culture and refinement; of schools, churches, and libraries; of artistic and musical and scientific associations and of refined *homes*, so that the intelligent and educated stranger who comes to cast his lot with the people of this favored land need not fear but that he and his family may enjoy all the advantages of the advanced civilization and social life to which they have been accustomed."

The two pages which followed were even more profusely illustrated. Abel gave special attention to the first picture, which represented a tall woman in flowing garments and with outstretched wings, decorated with roses and other flowers. Her gaze seemed to be penetrating the future and her outstretched arms

to be welcoming it. Abel thought that if the artist had seen the face of Heloise he could easily have made the countenance of the woman more angelic; still the picture was poetically conceived and it pleased him. Only one small portion of the article, "The City of the Angels," had received any notice apparently at the hands of Heloise, though doubtless it had all been carefully read by this indefatigable young woman: the word "homes" had, of course, a little line underneath.

"After all is said, the chief attraction which Los Angeles presents to our Eastern visitors is found in the beautiful *homes* that extend for mile after mile through the residential sections of the city."

"Ah, more women," said Abel, as he proceeded to examine the picture on the top of page ten. "They are on the outside of the house again," he added, as he gave a young woman seated in a rustic settee his especial attention.

"Surely, the climate must be a mild one," he added, since the robes were mostly without sleeves and quite low at the neck, while one of the women wore sandals.

Another woman held a scroll in one hand on which Abel read the word "Philippines." The other words he could not make out. There were some lines radiating from one point — probably Los Angeles — some distance out in

the Pacific to little splotches — islands likely — and to the mainland on the other side. Her other hand was extended and she appeared to be pointing across a vast expanse of water to the setting sun.

The article below was entitled, "Looking Across the Sea." Abel, as usual, read only the marked portion:

"My five years' residence in the Far East as a United States Minister, and my extensive travels through all of the principal Asiatic lands, have convinced me that America's greatest undeveloped commercial opportunity is in the Pacific and the lands beyond. If there is any section of the United States which will receive more benefits from the development of Asiatic trade than any other, it is the Pacific Coast States. The future of the great commonwealths, California, Oregon and Washington, and of their near neighbors, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho and Montana, is one of vast promise.

"We now can see how we shall develop in these States a prosperity comparable to that of the Eastern States. We can see reasons why an immense population should yet make the Far West its home. . . .

"I look forward to the evolution of the ideal American in California. There, with all the conditions favorable to the fostering of the best manhood and the best citizenship, this possibility should some day come true. The Americanism of the Coast is already in many respects ahead of that of the Atlantic States, but in time it will reach even a much higher level than

is now attained. When that day comes California will not only be the Empire (*the word 'Empire' was crossed out and the word 'leading' substituted in the margin*) state of this nation, but an influence that will be felt throughout the entire world."

The rest of the article was unmarked. Abel did not read it, but as he glanced it over he could not help seeing such expressive headlines as, "The Open Door to the Orient," "The Trans-Siberian Railway, and What it Means to the Pacific Coast," "Southern California's Share in the Prospective Commerce," "The Part California Must Play in the Struggle for Supremacy in the Far East," and "The Entering Wedge for American Manufacturers."

Not perceiving any faint pencil lines anywhere, Abel paused only an instant now and then to examine the exhibits of fruits which profusely illustrated several pages. He turned a leaf quite unsuspectingly, when what should he see but the man with the hoe again? It was too much. He felt the same spasm of jealousy which had attacked him earlier in the evening.

"It's nonsense, I know," he said to himself, "but I can't bear that man with the hoe!"

And fearing that Heloise had marked some more laudatory passages concerning this individual, Abel abruptly put the big paper down and took up a small pamphlet.

In it he found some amusing and interesting

items respecting the birth and development of the City of the Angels. It appeared that the city was founded because worn-out soldiers, and soldiers whose term of service had expired, wanted a settled home. To supply this need, there were laid out thirty small fields near the public square by the alluvial bottom land of the river, so that irrigation could supplement rain in providing moisture for their crops. Each head of the family was allowed a hoe —

At this point Abel nearly dropped the pamphlet.

"So the bona fide inhabitants of Los Angeles have for their progenitor the man with the hoe," he muttered.

Then, conquering his disgust — or jealousy — he read how these men with their hoes celebrated the founding of their new-born city in the California wilderness. The good fathers of the mission, as well as Don Felipe, with his showy guard of soldiers, were present. Naturally "the priests and neophytes chanted. . . . The cross was set, the flag of Spain and the banner of Our Queen of the Angels were unfurled and the new town marked out around a square a little to the north of the present Plaza. . . . The soldiers named their home Nuestra Reina de Los Angeles," a name as long as the times were slow-paced.

Abel was amused to learn that the Angelinos

did not think it necessary to build in an elaborate manner—probably on account of the excellence of the climate. They reared simple adobe huts, in which they left an open place for entrance and exit and inserted some panes of glass. Their church was equally guiltless of complexity and ornamentation and contained no such luxuries as seats. Everyone knelt during the devotional exercises, when not standing, and the women being attired in bright colors, the scene reminded the onlooker of a garden gorgeous with dahlias and tulips.

But evolution made discord in the City of the Angels, as it has done in every terrestrial paradise, from the Garden of Eden up to date. Though the Angelinos were naturally devout and confessed their sins and underwent their penances with the docility and simplicity of children, the Church, desiring a more strenuous type of piety, proceeded to plant in this new paradise a forbidden tree, and issued an edict to the effect that these simple children of nature should not dance their favorite *escandalosissima* dance, and that whoever refused to obey should be excommunicated. Then did these new Adams and Eves prove no more obedient than the first couple, for history affirms they danced the *escandalosissima* just the same.

When Abel came to the part relating to the many wonderful fights the Angelinos had made

in desperate resistance to new political ideas he began to realize how very tired he was. Presently his head fell back on his comfortable chair and he soon was fast asleep.

He dreamed that God had made a brand-new Paradise and that He had put himself, together with his beloved Heloise, in it to tend and to keep it. And that when Heloise had asked him, "Is it really our own, and can we eat of every tree?" a Voice had replied, "The garden is yours. Eat freely of every tree — and if you take good care of your garden it will reward you abundantly."

Then Abel thought Heloise had turned to him with a pretty air of triumph, as she said:

"Ah, Abelard *mio*, did I not tell you that God is a Generous God, that He withholds nothing good from His children?"

CHAPTER IX
A STRUGGLE WITH LOVE



"I WENT in search of love and lost myself." — *Hindu Proverb.*

"HE either fears his fate too much, or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch and win or lose it all."

"ALL the world loves a lover." — *Emerson.*

IX

A Struggle with Love



THE fiery glow of breaking day was piercing the leaden gray sky when Abel awoke. With a wrench his mind came back from the land of dreams, only to be filled again with his ever-present dilemma. He sprang to his feet and began to pace the floor.

All at once memory brought back an occasion on which Heloise had casually mentioned a relative on her mother's side who lived in Northampton, in Western Massachusetts. Might she have halted there on her journey? What was more natural than that she should stop there to see her mother's sister once more before putting a continent between them?

He looked hurriedly at a time-table and then at his watch. Yes, there was time to catch the early morning train for Northampton. But, supposing he did? he had no clue to the whereabouts of Heloise's aunt!

A happy thought struck him. His Heloise had been educated at the woman's college in that town; he would stop there and inquire; surely some one in that institution would be able to put him on the right track. He hastily

thrust a few needful articles into a "grip," penned a line to Mrs. Fields in excuse of his disappearance, and noiselessly left the house.

Never had the Reverend Abel Allen known so strange an existence as was his during the next few hours. His early love experience had been intense, his suffering acute, yet from it he could draw no aid with which to meet his present plight. He had then been free to love the maiden of his choice; nothing had parted them except the girl's own unworthiness — her vapid mind and vacillating will. But here was a woman of mind, of soul, of charm, with a power that drew him to her with hooks of steel. She was in every way worthy of his deepest devotion, his highest faith, yet to love her was a sin against all he had hitherto proclaimed and mainly believed; and to marry her — after her admitted infidelity — would be a spiritual and a social abomination, a crime in the eyes of his congregation.

Reason told him that his quest was in vain, that even should he find her and pour out his soul at her feet, as man never had before, she would refuse him. Yet he would try! Only the flitting, fitful ghost of a hope visited him intermittently as the train bore him on.

He asked himself — "But supposing there is a chance that I could persuade her, and that we should marry in the face of all — what then?

Heloise will never capitulate to popular opinion, she will not play a part that would be a daily lie — she will not even parley a point where truth is at stake. And I as figure-head in this situation! What is left me to do? Resign from the ministry of an Orthodox pulpit. Nothing else."

At this point a groan escaped Abel, for he thought of his empty exchequer and the plain but pertinent information he had obtained from Heloise's landlady as to the limited supply of that young lady's personal funds. Where could he obtain another pulpit? He realized, of course, that with his well-earned reputation as a preacher, certain "liberal" pulpits would be open to him; but with the inevitable commotion which his resignation would arouse, and the consequent reprisals that would surely follow an open avowal of facts, he could not feel at all sure of how long even the means of livelihood might be withheld from him. His sensitive temperament shrank from the notoriety that inevitably follows such a severance from time-approved moorings; his vivid imagination pictured the petty malice, the skulking lie that pursues its devious course unseen until it blossoms into open scandal, whose roots draw sustenance from one knows not where.

Into what a vortex was he about to draw the woman he adored! And yet, the blind, pro-

pelling force of destiny drew Abel on to his coveted goal. He could not now escape it if he would, and would not if he could.

It is needless to relate each detail of his arrival at Northampton, his quest at its seat of learning, the baffling value of the clew he held — when even the name of the aunt of Heloise had escaped his memory — and at last his chance encounter with one who had been a teacher of Heloise, and whose timely agency enabled him to find his way to her.

The guiding instinct that had surmounted reason and had led Abel on from the moment of his awakening from restless sleep, had not mocked him. The home he sought and found was a simple, cozy cottage, set within an old garden where old-fashioned New England flowers ran riot. The front door was open, and as Abel's figure filled the entrance, and while his hand was lifted to pull the bell, the open door of a distant room revealed to him a glimpse of Heloise seated at the dining-table. Her hat and traveling jacket lay on a chair beside her. The hour was high noon. Instinctively Abel knew that she had merely halted there over night and was taking a hasty meal before catching the onward train to the West.

As his shadow darkened the doorway, Heloise looked up, and with an exclamation of mingled surprise and dismay sprang to her feet.

He advanced toward her, the courage of despair upon him.

"Your Abelard is here to claim you!" he cried.

He had come there without thought of how he was to greet her and almost without hope of finding her, but had he planned his words hours in advance, he could not have said anything that would more quickly have made her mistress of herself. In a moment she had regained her old-time, easy, gracious, simple poise.

"Aunt Emily," she said, "this is the Reverend Mr. Allen, the pastor and dear friend of my father. Mr. Allen, this is Mrs. Norris, my nearest living relative."

Luckily for Abel, Mrs. Norris was one of those motherly women with a "born knack" for making men comfortable. In a moment, she had taken the honors of entertaining out of Heloise's hands, and Abel, almost without volition on his part, found himself seated at table opposite to his adored one, while the mistress of the house pressed both to do justice to what was placed before them.

Abel was deadly pale, but his pallor scarcely exceeded that of Heloise during the first moment of their meeting. As Mrs. Norris's shrewd eyes traveled rapidly from one countenance to another, she took in the situation at a glance, and her efforts to restore balance proved both

timely and effective. As soon as propriety would allow, she excused herself, "in order to consult a market-man at the back door," she claimed, and Abel and his beloved were left alone.

Abel lost no time in coming to the charge.

"I know I am doing an unusual thing," he began — "an unprecedented thing for one in my position — but do it I must. I can think of nothing but you; your image comes between me and my work; it has grown to be an obsession which I must grapple with, conquer, and reduce to a tangible reality, or it will make life worthless and my mission a failure."

Heloise had summoned all her strength to meet the inevitable. She looked at him with an indulgent smile while he spoke.

"You have lost your head, my Abelard. What is your mission — to preach the Gospel of Christ crucified?" she asked.

He regarded her in silence.

"How could you do that with me by your side, a reproach to your convictions, an embodied lie to your utterances?" she continued.

"My mission shall be henceforth to proclaim the truth as it is revealed to me at first hand, as I see it myself, and who can so well aid me in that as you?"

She studied his face with shining eyes, the

blood that had retreated from her cheeks coming slowly back.

"And your people, your church, Abel? Above all, your *deacons?*" she queried.

Her cool questioning helped to restore calm to his overwrought nerves.

"I think I can withdraw myself from the deacons without any great wrench of soul," he said, while a smile flitted over his pale lips and lighted momentarily his weary eyes.

"Do you really mean you will give up the ministry?" she asked.

"Of an orthodox church, yes."

"And then?"

"God knows! Some more liberal pulpit may open its door to me."

The surprise, the expectancy, faded from her face. He was not slow to perceive the change and hastened to add:

"It shall be wholly as you say, Heloise. I have won your love, you have confessed it. I know not how nor why it should be so — for I feel my unworthiness — but it is my crown of glory that it is so. Your love has already revealed a new world to me, a world of larger spiritual scope and meaning. Your father's deathbed confession burst the shell of dogma within which I had so long striven to confine myself, and other revelations followed. Your silent confession, my proposal, your refusal, my

search for you, my sleepless night of agony when I found you had escaped me, the inspiration which led me on till I found you here, all mean but one thing — that Providence is drawing us to each other! We are meant to work out our destinies hand in hand. You must not travel westward, away from me, alone; you must marry me here and *now!*"

A pained smile disturbed Heloise's beautiful lips. "And return with you to face your congregation as your bride?" she said almost inaudibly, her eyes piercing into his.

Abel winced. "No," he said slowly, "I would not counsel your doing that. I only urge that you marry me at once — to prevent your putting a continent between us. You could remain with your aunt while I return to-day and tender my resignation —"

"And then, my Abelard?"

"Then, my Heloise, the world is wide for you and me."

"Why not add the old saw — 'the world is well lost for love.'"

"That goes without saying."

"Not with me. There are things of smaller bulk than the world which a right-minded woman ought not to give up, even for love."

"Name one!"

"*A principle!* Have you forgotten our talks together on the equality of marriage for man

and woman? I could not promise to be your wife without promising to be your vassal."

An agonized gasp involuntarily escaped Abel.

"For God's sake, Heloise, do not drag in the question of vassalage between you and me! What are words spoken, what are promises made — it is the intention, the faith, the love —"

"Ah, yes, I know," she sighed, "women have promised with their lips while making reservations in their hearts; that is the old devious way, the only way by which woman ever gained an inch of power; the miserable custom that has forced all the clever women of history and story to assume the guise of *intrigantes*, trickstresses! What is the good of modern enlightenment and of the concessions that woman herself has wrung from man, if she is no better able now than of yore to stand squarely on her own feet and suffer and be strong without paltry compromise?"

Abel threw out his hands towards her imploringly. "All that is nothing between you and me, Heloise; all reasoning is but as the idle wind, in the face of a love that neither time nor eternity can blot out!"

"Ah, my Abelard," spoke the woman, in tones of deepest tenderness, "the faith in headlong passion has been depended upon from time immemorial, and failed; its strains have been sung and drawn tears and tremors from men

and women who even while they wept knew themselves incapable of making the one great sacrifice for love such as I make now — for though I renounce, I love you with my whole soul, Abelard!"

He sprang to his feet and almost leaped towards her. But she was equally quick in her movements and had the table between them in a trice. With one hand turned palm outward towards him, she leaned the other on the table while she spoke.

"Listen, Abel, while I tell you a little story. In the eyes of men generally I know it would tell against my attractiveness as a woman — perhaps it may in yours. However, it will illustrate the fact that to stand alone for a principle was strong in me even before my womanhood.

"It was in my school days. I was very young when the 'star young man' of the village, as he was called, was good enough to show a preference for me above the other girls. I was not above feeling flattered. How could I be, how could any girl? He was rich, attractive, sought after. But he had a most evil reputation where women were concerned. The moment his preference for me became known I went up several points in the estimation of the whole school — even while teachers and pupils alike threw out cautious hints against his wiles. My decision was quickly made; I froze him —

even while longing for the prestige his attentions would have lent me, and feeling perfectly secure of my own strength against his blandishments. When forced to explain to my friends that I did this in support of a principle and in the interest of all women against all men of his sort, I became the butt of the school! I was pointed to as the female Quixote who had begun a lone tilt against the village Apollo — the sun god who drew all eyes in his direction. Well, the girl who laughed most at the futility of my lone stand against current social tactics ended — after much humiliation to herself — in marrying that man and lived for a time in a matrimonial hell, from which the law finally released her. She is a hopelessly cynical woman to-day.

"The point I wish to maintain in telling this story is that had those girls combined the result would have been the utter defeat of that man's prestige. Men are fond of telling women that they do not know their power, that if they did men would be helpless before them. Ah, how true that is, though in another way than men intend it! Every disadvantage that woman suffers from is due to her own lack of courage, her own lack of combination, her own lack of heroism to stand alone for the right, if need be. I may have to deny myself the happiness of living in the daily light of your love during my

natural life, Abel, but if the burden be mine, God willing, I will endure it, rather than strike colors before a principle. On that point, Abel, the experience of my parents has wonderfully deepened my convictions."

"Heloise, in our case you are fighting a phantom — wearing yourself out on a shadow."

"No, Abel, it is a substance. Time will prove it. Go back, my love, to your work. Close your soul's doors on the creed you have outgrown; treat it as you would an old garment, good only for those whom it still fits. Follow the kindly light that has dawned upon you. Preach the new Gospel. Do your work, leaving unto God the rest. I, too, will do mine. If in due time, and the fulfilment of the social evolution now pending, we can come together in a marriage honorable to us both, our lives will be the richer for the temporary denial."

Abel stood mute, subdued, pale and worn. Mechanically he held out his open arms, while his lips framed rather than articulated the words:

"Once more?"

"A benediction till a happier meeting," murmured she, and gliding forward she put her hands upon his shoulders and her lips to his forehead.

In vain she tried to release herself a moment later. Like in a vise was she held to his heart,

her face buried on his shoulder to avoid the kisses which he lavished on her fair neck.

The woman grew dizzy and weak under the power of the emotion she had evoked. What the result might have been she never dared afterwards to assert, even to herself.

Both were saved from the fate common to lovers in their plight by the reappearance of Mrs. Norris. That shrewd dame made no little noise in her approach.

"If you want to catch your train you have scarce five minutes to the good!" she called out, even before pushing open the door.

When she entered, the two stood apart, facing her with the air of self-confessed culprits, while she, good woman, bore in her countenance every mark of a lively disposition to shrive them then and there, and the desire besides to do all in her power to spare them from future ruthlessness towards themselves.

"Hope you have brought her to her senses and she has given up going?" she said, turning to Abel.

Heloise was the first to recover herself.

"No," she said, "we both know that it is best for me to go."

And before either Abel or her aunt could protest, she had donned hat and coat and was moving to the door, suit-case in hand.

"Aunt Emily," she said, her hand on the

door-knob, "I never could *bear* to be escorted to a train; in this case I emphatically protest against either you or Mr. Allen going a foot out of the house to accompany me. I cannot stand it! Surely you do not want to see me break down. Make Mr. Allen stay awhile — help him, he has been ill — it will take your mind off my going. God bless you both!"

In the course of the next few hours, Mrs. Norris discovered that she did indeed need to minister to Abel. She believed him to be a dangerously sick man and told him so. But despite all her warnings she was unable to detain him more than a few hours. Late in the afternoon he took the train homeward and reached his own quarters in the friendly darkness of the night. Once ensconced there, he relaxed the strain on his nervous strength that had enabled him to gain its shelter, and lost all consciousness of time and place.

CHAPTER X
MARY AND MARTHA



"ASTRAY, full of doubts, he nevertheless, in his horror of violence, made common cause with old society, now reduced to defend itself; unable though he was to say whence would come the new Messiah of Gentleness, in whose hands he would have liked to place poor ailing mankind." — *Zola.*

X

Mary and Martha



POOR, worn-out Abel! He slept late the next morning; and so heavily that the maid who brought him his breakfast failed to awaken him when she lightly knocked on his door. As it was slightly ajar, she pushed it open in order to place the heavy tray on a stand near the big armchair in which Abel was seated, asleep.

At first Letty thought the minister had perhaps risen very early to do some extra reading or writing. But she soon perceived that he had not been to bed and that he was not sleeping lightly but soundly. Fearing that he might be ill, she quickly returned to her mistress, who with her husband was eating her morning meal.

"What is it, Letty?" asked Mrs. Fields, perceiving that something was amiss.

"Why, the dear minister looks as if he were not long for this world! He is fast asleep in his chair, with the look of an angel on his face. He has not been in his bed the livelong night!"

"Ah, he has been at the bedside of some dying person and returned late, I suppose."

"But you should see him! With the rays of

the sun coming in through the shutters on his head, he makes such a picture! — only he looks as if he were not long for this world!"

Thoroughly frightened, Mrs. Fields rose at once, saying, "Come, John, let us go and see for ourselves if he is ill."

"You go! I must hurry off to my business. I'm late now."

Mr. Fields already had on his hat and overcoat. He kissed his wife in a perfunctory way, while she protested that he was fast becoming a bloodless machine, and was soon out of sight and hearing.

Mrs. Fields was a woman of the large blond type, and had been a semi-invalid since the loss of her son, her only child. As she imagined that Abel resembled this lost son, she insisted upon playing a mother's part to him. She herself prepared his *café au lait* and toast every morning, and saw that he had a fresh egg and fresh fruit, and she sent the dainty breakfast to his study at a certain hour, so as to be sure that Abel got one regular meal a day.

Mrs. Fields tapped at Abel's door before looking in. Receiving no response, she ventured within and was immediately struck, as Letty had been, with the angelic beauty of Abel's face as he reposed in his big armchair. Slanting beams of sunlight penetrated the partly closed shutters and rested on his head. His

fine, glossy, dark hair, which parted naturally in the middle of his forehead, was tossed back from his handsome brow, reminding one of the upper part of the head of the Christ in Raphael's painting of the "Transfiguration." The features of the lower part more nearly resembled those of "Il Salvatore" of del Sarto.

"He must be having pleasant dreams," said Mrs. Fields to herself, as she gazed on the serenity of Abel's countenance. "If only he were not so thin," she added, as she noticed the unnatural whiteness of his hands, which rested on the arms of his chair. "I must speak to my husband about arranging a long vacation for him," was her thought as she retraced her steps.

Mrs. Fields did speak to her husband that same evening about this matter, but it was too late. Mr. Fields was a busy man, immersed in a thousand cares, and nothing was done until after Abel was down. Overwork and irregular living had sown the seeds of an illness which the worry about Heloise and the coming break in his relations with his church had rapidly developed. As he regained strength very slowly, and his people were obliged to engage a temporary substitute, the consent of those in authority was finally obtained to the petition of the Marys and the Marthas that their pastor should be permitted an early and a long vacation. It was intimated that the women should raise the extra

money required to send him away somewhere, and some of the more ambitious sisters suggested Europe. The men claimed that they already had to raise more money for church matters than they knew how to obtain.

Mrs. Symonds was the first one to be consulted when there was money to be raised by the women, so Mrs. Fields hurried to that lady's home as soon as the desired permission had been obtained from the deacons.

"Oh, Mrs. Symonds," was her greeting, "how could we do without you? I am so glad that you are well again."

"Well, what is wanted now?" asked the practical Martha, seating her visitor.

"Do you know that our poor minister is sick in bed, and that unless something is done for him quickly, he may never leave it? Only God knows how 'twill be! But I have been cheering him up by telling him he shall go just where he likes when he is better, and stay until his health is fully restored; and now we must make the money to give him a good send-off. You will take this matter in charge, won't you? You are always our leader in things of this sort."

"You have not heard that I am getting ready to go to California with my daughter?" asked Mrs. Symonds, hesitatingly.

"Yes, I have heard all about it, and how your new daughter is the loveliest creature on earth,

and lives but to make you happy. But really, can't you serve us once more? Remember, it's for our dear minister, who has nearly committed suicide in our behalf — I mean a slow, sacrificial sort of suicide," begged Mrs. Fields.

Mrs. Symonds glanced quickly and sharply at her. Could she have heard the cause of her son's death? She had merely told her friends that he had died suddenly, after a short illness. She could not bring herself to say more. Evidently Mrs. Fields was guiltless of a knowledge of the fact that had lain like a nightmare on the mother's soul, for she was placidly gazing about the room, noting the many pretty changes which had been made in it since the advent of the daughter, and how many elegant additions there were. Then she sighed and wished that she, too, had a fresh young creature to love her and to cling to her. To be sure, the young minister was like a son to her whenever she saw him, but alas, he was so busy — and she was obliged to share his affection with so many other people!

"Well, I don't mind, although we expect to go West within a month, and have many things to arrange; since I'm never coming back, except to visit, it will crowd me a good deal. But there's justice in what you say. Our minister has nearly — if not quite — lost his life for us, and it's only fair that we help him regain it. I

love the man, though I despise his creed. With his tender heart he ought not to be connected with any orthodox church."

"So you have really become a free thinker? I mean an outspoken one? There are many women doing a deal of thinking nowadays, but they mostly keep quiet about it. You know what the Bible says?" inquired Mrs. Fields, calmly.

"Yes, I know what the Bible says, and I know what common sense says. Common sense says that since God gave women a tongue which moves freely in her mouth, He meant her to use it for the things which are lovely and of good report. Is orthodoxy lovely and of good report? No, it is not; it is a hideous libel on God and His dealings with man. It is based on that shameful Adam and Eve story, where God is made to curse and carry on like a vindictive and fanatical creature of the human species."

"But you are a member of our church. Surely you can't throw stones at the rest of us?" Mrs. Fields smiled in her usual easy-going, pleasant manner.

"I shall soon be clear of this whole mess of madness and the rubbish which has been our approved spiritual food!"

"Going to run away — eh?" This time Mrs. Fields laughed outright.

"Yes, Mrs. Fields, that is one of the reasons

why I am willing to leave almost everything I hold dear and go into a strange country among strange people."

"Ah, but you should not take orthodoxy so seriously! I know of no other woman who takes it so hard as you do. I don't! If we can't hinder the men from believing horrid things, we might as well keep still and make the best of things as we find them, and passively accept the situation. That's *my* creed! I get along very well with my husband by knowing when to keep still and when to speak."

"Then you love your husband better than you love truth?" asked Mrs. Symonds tartly.

"Ah, me — what is truth? Do any of us know? — and in the meantime I love peace and my husband." Mrs. Fields looked affectionately into the eyes of her severe friend.

Her kindly, sentimental nature rebelled against some of the things taught in the Bible, but as a judge of creeds she distrusted herself and felt no call to traverse dangerous ground. Down deep in her heart she felt sure that the Andover Creed (which her husband believed to be the most perfect, because in early life he had studied to be a minister at the Andover Theological Seminary) was not fit for a mother to hold, but she refrained from saying so, "because it would hurt dear John's feelings."

"None of us know what is truth, but it always

seemed to me that we ought to be true to what we believe to be the truth," returned Mrs. Symonds.

"How is it that you have only lately awakened to the untruthful nature of the faith that you have always professed?"

"Well, I have always done some private thinking, but like you I kept quiet about it. My son's sudden death revolutionized me. He was not orthodox, so, according to the orthodox creed, he is to awake to shame and everlasting contempt, and with devils be plunged into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever and forever," said Mrs. Symonds bitterly.

"Oh, Heavens! For pity's sake be quiet! I have not read an orthodox creed for years, and I can't bear to listen to that portion of it. Come, let us put our heads together about raising the necessary money for our beloved pastor's trip to Europe, where he is to stay until he is a new man physically!"

"And theologically, I hope!" added Mrs. Symonds.

"No, no, that won't do! The deacons never would permit it. They are business men who respect theological systems too much to ever learn anything."

"Well, I'm ready to do everything I can to get our minister as far away as possible from that ignorant, narrow, autocratic set. I will call

and see you about the matter to-morrow morning, if you will be at leisure. Just now I must be off on some business matters with my dear daughter. She is waiting for me, I see, outside, in the carriage. We will take you with us as far as your home, if you would care to ride?"

"Thank you. I shall be delighted. — Yes, do come in the morning early! We must get to work as quickly as possible," she added as they moved toward the door. "Shall you join any church where you are going?"

"My daughter belongs to what I believe she calls 'The Free Christian Church.' Whether that is its correct name or not, I cannot say. She tells me that any person over eighteen years of age can become a voting member by registration of name and address and the payment of a small sum each year. It is quite democratic in government, you see, and no doctrinal agreement is required. Its aim is to provide means of spiritual development, without the repressing and depressing influence of old, outgrown theological systems."

"How are you to be saved according to this new democratic church?"

"The Free Christian Church, it seems, looks upon nobody as eternally lost; and salvation merely means deliverance from superstition, sin, and ignorance — the last two being usually one and the same thing. One is to cease to do

evil and learn to do well, in obedience to the laws of Nature and with the assistance of a wise and loving God, who is not only the Father but also the Mother of the human family."

"So you do not have to make any special preparations for a future life — do not have to repent, accept Christ, and go about trying to save other people — and all that sort of thing?" inquired Mrs. Fields, a little more interested than she cared to show.

"In so far as Christ was God-like, we accept Him, of course. What the new Free Christians are *not* obliged to accept is the theological system which makes salvation depend on the acceptance of a certain group of ideas, that when subjected to the light of reason becomes a libel on the goodness and wisdom of the Creator of the Universe," replied Mrs. Symonds, as they took their seats in the carriage.

CHAPTER XI
THE MYSTERY OF PAIN



"THE laws of disease are as beautiful as the laws of health."

XI

The Mystery of Pain



A LIFE of study and reflection had given Heloise what the world called advanced views, but she never thought of putting them forward. If anyone had asked her, "Why do you not go out in the world and work for the equality of men and women — in marriage and in the national life?" she would very likely have said: "I feel no call to a public life of any kind. Besides, is it not the men, our fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, who have placed and keep us where we are, and is it not for them to restore us to our God-given place by their side?"

If the interlocutor had continued, "Why, then, do you not do as others do — marry into avowed inequality, trusting to man to right the present unequal condition of the sexes in his own good time and way?" she would have replied: "I can't quite make up my mind to do evil hoping that good will come, and active opposition is not my forte. I can only be firm in passive rejection. I will not marry promising lifelong vassalage to any man. I will not help to propagate an inequality which retards the

advance of the American people and hence the race."

However, in some respects Heloise was a woman with very commonplace ideals. She inherited the natural instinct of every woman for a home. When she went West her guiding thought was that by so doing she might prepare a home for Abel and herself and have it in prime order against the time when they could enter it as husband and wife, in the way she approved, a home where they could live mostly out of doors; for Heloise loved the blue sky, the wide ocean, trees, fruits, flowers, even unornamental vegetables. All her life she had been shut up in boarding-houses, or within college or hospital walls. She panted for outdoor Nature as a convict sighs for freedom. When she found herself in love with "Abelard" her first thought was to go West, to South California, where people live much in the arms of nature, and to steadfastly set about making a home.

In order, however, to be able to do this money must be made and saved. She would pursue her profession of a trained nurse until she could secure a plot of land on which she could make a living and lay by something each year. She dreamed of a comfortable and picturesque cottage, nothing more, for were they not going to live mostly out of doors, like the people of the

pictures in the New Year's number of the big newspaper?

Heloise found little difficulty in procuring a situation, which, unpromising as it must have looked to others — that of nurse to a woman subject to epileptic fits — was quite to her mind because it was in the country, not far from a suburb of Los Angeles. She was to receive an excellent salary, since the situation was not a coveted one, and since she was also to act as housekeeper in the somewhat solitary place.

Mrs. Hall, whom Heloise was to serve, had in younger days been very beautiful. Her husband had been a brave, handsome man, who was sure that marriage would cure his lovely bride of the infirmity which had attacked her at intervals since early youth. Years of tenderness had failed to ameliorate the physical insecurity of the woman, and now that her husband was dead and her children scattered her life was becoming each day more uncertain, and each day more to be dreaded, because of the increasing visits of the terrible disease.

Mrs. Hall greeted her new nurse with a pallid face and the ghost of a smile. Heloise thought that she had never seen a countenance so bereft of hope. Yet there was a sort of pathetic resignation about the woman's look and manner that won her heart in an instant.

"My dear young woman," sighed rather than

said Mrs. Hall, "how full of life you look. It's a sad place you have come to. We — the house, the ground, myself — are in decay. It is a pity to bury the living with the dead."

Again the invalid sighed as she offered Heloise a chair. She was sitting underneath a great tree in front of the house.

"Do not worry about me," said Heloise with her brightest smile. "I am delighted with everything I see in this beautiful country. I am sure I shall love you and your cottage and your trees; and the flowers, too, which I see are struggling for dear life in the embrace of so many weeds."

"Yes, the weeds have taken advantage of my increasing weakness and are in possession. Only the big trees hold their own, and they need trimming. If you are not too tired from your journey I will show you my poor decaying place. It needs a lot of money spent upon it and I have none to spare."

"I am not in the least tired and I should be charmed to see everything," returned Heloise.

Mrs. Hall took Heloise over the house first. It was a simple cottage with a porch in front and contained but five rooms. While it was reasonably clean, everything looked old and out of repair. As Heloise passed through the rooms she observed that some repairs and restorations were quite within her own strength and

skill, others required man's trained hand and ingenuity.

The grounds lay mostly at the rear of the house and were overgrown with rank weeds, some of which were veritable instruments of torture, as the venturesome Heloise soon discovered.

"To be frank, your garden seems to be a survival of the unfittest!" said Heloise, as she looked about and saw enough weeds to stock the country round about.

"Yes, they ought to be burned but I dare not undertake it. My son has been going to attend to them for some time past, but he is very busy and forgets how fast weeds grow and mature in this country."

"Are you willing that I should fight them while you are asleep or do not especially need my services in the house?" asked Heloise, looking longingly at the field of tall, dry brambles and burrs, underneath which was growing a new crop.

"Indeed, I should be more than willing, but I fear you would spoil that lovely complexion of yours, and your hands — have they ever done a bit of hard labor?"

"You will soon learn whether my hands are good-for-nothing or otherwise. Ah, I am overjoyed at all I see!" and Heloise was the picture of rosy delight.

"Overjoyed! Why, there is nothing to see but a field of rank weeds with some fruit trees and big bushes struggling for life in the midst of a wilderness of thorns and thistles." Mrs. Hall turned her sad blue eyes upon her nurse and heaved a deep sigh.

Heloise was, however, too healthy and energetic to be affected by the despair of her employer.

"Do not grieve any more over this little wilderness of weeds, for it will soon be a little paradise of fruit and flowers. I love Nature and shall work so hard that she will be encouraged to do her best."

Heloise gave her mistress a wistful look, fearing that she might on second thought take back her generous promise to let her have a free hand in the garden.

But Mrs. Hall evidently had no such intention, though she said warningly:

"Be careful of that lovely complexion, and those rosy-tipped fingers. If I were able I would have a man do the rough work and let you merely superintend it. But to employ a man whom I could trust would cost me more than I can spare just now. Besides, things have to be looked after constantly or the busy weeds are again in evidence."

"Ah, these big saucy weeds! They'll find in me a sharp-eyed mistress," said Heloise, shaking her head at them.

"You seem very mild. I cannot imagine you looking severe," returned Mrs. Hall.

"Oh, that is because I have never had any *weeds* to deal with. Do you know, I believe that this new environment is going to make of me an energetic, sharp-eyed, managing sort of an individual?" Heloise spoke with a decision that surprised herself.

Mrs. Hall sighed, and smiled almost at the same time — her fleeting, ghostly smile. Then she shook her head.

"That would be a pity, for we have already so many of that kind of women in America. We need more of the Madonna type who are satisfied to love and smile and adore the young child that God places in their care. Promise me that if you will work in the garden you will wear my big, light straw hat. It is lined with a delicate shade of silk that protects the complexion from the too ardent sun. Also you must wear my heavy gloves — unless you have already provided yourself with these things?"

Heloise admitted that she had nothing of the kind, and they walked slowly back to the house. Mrs. Hall explained to her nurse the frequency of late of her epileptic seizures and assured her that she need not be alarmed at her horrible appearance when they were at their worst, even if she had the appearance of being dead. She assured Heloise that she need not even look a

her, and that nothing was to be done under these circumstances; that when the fit was over she recovered consciousness and could easily assist herself to rise, if she were attacked in the day time. If at night, she presently went to sleep again, or remained awake courting sleep, as the case might be. If Heloise was quite determined to do away with the weeds in her garden, the best time to do so was in the morning, for she herself did not rise early. When she required Heloise to prepare her breakfast she would blow a shrill whistle.

They supped pleasantly together, chatting meanwhile of various matters of small moment, for Mrs. Hall was a woman of the old-fashioned type, excellent in some respects, but having a narrow horizon. In a way, she was well versed in the Scriptures, and spent much of her leisure in reading them. Having all her life been subject to an affliction which made her a martyr, she yet was the most loyal of Christians, the most unquestioning and devoted of believers. So child-like was she in her faith that when Heloise asked if she had tried a certain new remedy for her complaint, she promptly answered, "No, indeed not! When I was young I used to pray that God would remove this terrible thorn in my flesh, but as nothing came of my prayers I was convinced that, like St. Paul, I needed this messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

That night when they had retired to Mrs. Hall's chamber, which Heloise was also to occupy, Mrs. Hall asked her to read aloud the twelfth chapter of Second Corinthians, and instructed that if she was not asleep by the time the chapter was finished she was to keep on reading until she sank into slumber. Mrs. Hall had been accustomed to the monotonous, sing-song manner of reading of the average nurse and a chapter or two usually had the desired effect. Her new nurse, however, had been taught to read with great expression, and as she had a voice which was melody itself, this hour became a feature of Mrs. Hall's life. That first evening Heloise thought the invalid's eyes would never close. Ah, she little knew what a beautiful picture she made, and how the old woman was carried back to the time when her own face and figure were pleasant to look upon, and incense and devotion were hers — instead of constant affliction and loneliness.

"And is there no thorn in your life, my beautiful maid?" asked the woman at last.

"Oh yes, I have my thorn in the flesh," replied Heloise promptly.

"One would never guess it. You are the picture of health. Surely it can't be much of a thorn." A pitiful attempt at a smile played about the woman's colorless lips.

"Perhaps not, but I find it difficult to bear."

"Do you mind telling me what kind of a thorn it is?"

For the first time Heloise saw a look of interest on Mrs. Hall's face, in place of the apathy that dwelt there. Partly because she wished to distract the deeply afflicted woman from her troubles and partly to relieve her own soul, Heloise described her meeting with Abelard, the rare friendship and profound love which had followed, and the cruel separation.

"And what separated you?"

"Religion," laconically replied Heloise.

"That is odd. Why, it was religion which joined me to a lover who adored me and whom I worshiped, when my affliction had come nigh separating us. Three different times did I reply 'No' with firmness, fearing that if we married our children and descendants might be visited with my terrible affliction. It was only when he brought me a Bible with the words 'Be fruitful and multiply' well underscored that I consented to become his bride."

"Have your children and grandchildren escaped inheriting your malady?"

"*Every one*, thus far; and my husband was a devoted lover to the very last hour of his life. I do not see how I could have lived without him."

"You are patiently living without him now," suggested Heloise with a tender smile.

"No, I am not living! I am merely existing

from day to day and from night to night. This is not life: It is a living death, which I bear with such patience and resignation as God grants me. I am often tempted to take a sleeping potion and end it quickly; it would be so much better for my children. They are poor and they could inherit my little income. But I dare not! My husband was faithful to the end, and I too must be faithful in order to be with him in heaven when I drop this body. I doubt not that he is waiting as patiently for me as I am for him!" and she dropped back upon her pillow, exhausted.

In the middle of the night Heloise was suddenly awakened from a deep slumber by a feeling that something had happened. She put her hand forth in the direction of Mrs. Hall and it seemed to come into contact with a corpse.

She rose quickly and lighted a lamp. Holding it in one hand she stooped over the sufferer. Was she dead or was she merely in a fit of a more deadly character than usual? Heloise could not be sure and she watched her with the utmost anxiety for a few moments, caressing her forehead with a soft palm as she did so. Presently, she was delighted to see Mrs. Hall open her eyes. Heloise hastened to put down her light and smiled in an encouraging manner — for must it not be exceedingly depressing to wake so often from a condition so like death as to

be scarcely distinguishable from it, only to return into the same condition of hopeless misery?

As soon as Mrs. Hall could speak she said pleadingly: "At last I am in heaven, am I not? And you are a ministering spirit? Oh, take me quickly to my husband. He is waiting for me! Dear spirit, hasten, hasten!"

Tears filled the eyes of Heloise. How could she undeceive the woman — tell her that she was still in the midst of death. When Mrs. Hall saw the tears she said: "Alas! I am still fastened to this horrible body which a mockery of death is always pretending to free me from but never does. Oh, it is so trying to have this fiend always shooting his dart into me — making me a spectacle so hideous that my own children cannot live with me! What would you do if you were me? Come, tell me! Oh, I am so tired of it all!" Mrs. Hall grasped the young nurse's hands and held them tight while she awaited the answer.

"I think I should always be seeking a cure at the hands of Science. So many diseases have been mastered by this intrepid friend of the race, that surely the time is coming when yours, too, will be subject to the skill of man."

"I used to think that perhaps I had been taken possession of by a devil. If so, no one has ever been able to exorcise him or drive him away for any length of time. But blow out the

light and come to bed! It is not likely that I shall have another fit to-night. Sometimes I escape for several days. Occasionally for a week or two. And again I may have several very close together."

After the light had been extinguished for some little time and Mrs. Hall had tried in vain to go to sleep, she said suddenly:

"Do you believe that it is a devil that tortures me in this dreadful manner?"

Heloise had fallen into a light slumber, but she wakened immediately when her mistress spoke, and replied:

"No, no! how *could* I believe that God would permit a malignant spirit to torture for so many years a good woman, such as I already know you to be?"

"Then why this endless suffering, this endless slavery?" asked Mrs. Hall with a groan.

"I do not know, unless it is because our ancestors did not know how to live and we ourselves are still sinning against Nature's laws. But many diseases have been conquered by the science of man and this will be mastered likewise — perhaps in your time."

This idea was so new and so refreshing to Mrs. Hall that her mind dwelt upon it until she peacefully fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII
THE BIG ENVELOPE



"If thou fill thy brain with Boston and New York, with fashion and covetousness, and wilt stimulate thy jaded senses with wine and French coffee, thou shalt find no radiance of wisdom in the lonely waste of the pine woods." — *Emerson.*

XII

The Big Envelope



THE next morning Heloise rose with the sun. She dressed herself quickly, and did not forget to place on her shining, tightly coiled hair the big leghorn hat, and to encase her hands in the stout gloves. She also crossed a silk handkerchief about her neck and pinned it fast to her dress. For an instant she glanced into her looking-glass and smiled as she saw the picturesque figure it reflected back to her, then slipped out of doors so quietly that a mouse would scarcely have been disturbed, much less Mrs. Hall, who was sleeping soundly.

Ah, how delicious the air! how glorious the rising sun! even how sweet and calm and statuesque looking were the tall weeds! thought Heloise, as she paused a moment to glance about her. She felt inclined to run about the yard like a child before beginning her work. She recalled the story of the eland who was allowed out in his garden for the first time after the weather had become warm; how he had run and jumped for joy, and finally, as his spirits mounted higher, had rushed up to a young tree, then knelt before it, put his horns

about it and pulled it up by the roots. She did not feel the need of pulling up any trees, as there were plenty of weeds the thickness of whose stalks called for all her energy. When she realized what a multitude there were she quickly sought some farming implements which were kept hidden underneath the house. These proved to be in a very bad condition and so dull that nearly a golden hour had passed before she was ready to attempt any sort of a fight against her enemies — the briars and the thorns; and even after she had spent all this time in trying to mate the various parts of tools she found, and had used a little whetstone until the perspiration fairly ran down her cheeks, the small surprises in store for her did not lessen. The head of the hatchet *would* fly from its handle without warning, narrowly missing her head before alighting. The rake and the hoe played pranks not so dangerous but more nagging, so that Heloise's first morning was a fight with her tools rather than with the burrs. Still, she managed to get one moderate-sized pile of burr-brush cut and heaped, and to make a broad enough circle of cleared earth about it so that the fire would not spread.

Then she applied the match. Oh, what joy to watch the tongues of flame madly shoot through this dry heap, emitting a sharp, crackling sound, and then leap fiercely heavenward! The

flames rose so high and spread so rapidly that Heloise became alarmed. What if they should shoot over the cleared space and set fire to the bushes on the other side? In that case it would take but a few moments to burn the whole place down; for everything was as dry as tinder. The house would burn like kindling wood.

She seized the hoe and began to widen the space towards which a slight morning breeze was bending the flames. The hoe, perceiving its opportunity to have a little fun on its own account, immediately flew off the handle and landed in the midst of the fire.

"You are well punished for your little joke," said Heloise, as she proceeded to use the heavy shovel in its place. It was hot, tedious work, but she persisted until she saw that the flames were dying down as rapidly as they had risen. She had just begun to cut some more stalks preparatory to heaping a new pile, when the shrill whistle sounded. She gathered her tools quickly together, halting only an instant to glance at the quantity of dry, tall stalks which still held their ground.

"Ah, your days are numbered," she said, as she laughingly shook her head at them before retreating within doors.

The rest of the morning was spent in the little cottage with her mistress, but after dinner, while Mrs. Hall was taking her usual afternoon nap,

Heloise went again to the garden, this time rooting up the weeds in the beds in front of the house, which were robbing the flowers of their vitality and presenting to the passer-by that dismal picture, an unweeded garden. She enjoyed this freeing of the pretty, delicate flowers from the monopolistic enemies who were absorbing their substance, and leaving them to slowly perish, but she found more excitement in fighting the briars, burrs and thorns in the large plot at the back of the house. There she could call to her aid that mysterious agent of nature called *fire*, and revel in joy while he worked at her bidding, chuckling as he did so, and making at the same time such a gorgeous picture. What a friend of man is this thing, rightly controlled and rightly used!

Next morning Heloise managed to pile and burn two more heaps of brush. While the last one was flaming high above her head, and she was gazing at its work of swift destruction in a state of mingled delight and awe, there suddenly came to her a realizing sense of how it was that a timid people, who were at the same time vindictive by nature, might find a certain satisfaction in the thought that God would sometime make a bonfire of their enemies as she had done with the burrs. But where did the ancient people who first conceived this idea get the other notion that the big bonfire was to last

always? Could it be that they wished to enjoy, from a safe distance, the spectacle of a bonfire that never died down, but flamed in dazzling splendor everlastingly?

"Ah, what children they were, to be sure," meditated Heloise, as she turned her back on the charred remains of the thorns at the shrill call of Mrs. Hall's whistle.

"And what children we are to take so much of their prattle seriously," she added aloud to herself as she stepped into the house.

Though Heloise scarcely ever spoke of her Abelard, he was never absent from her prayers and rarely for any length of time from her thoughts. If she read anything beautiful, strange, or suggestive, she wished with all her heart that he could read and enjoy it too. When the flames of her bonfires rose highest and crackled loudest, she found herself saying, "Oh, if Abelard could only enjoy this gay scene with me!" And when she had made the house unusually tidy and had prepared a little daintier meal than usual, she yearned for her distant lover to share it with them. But Heloise's nature was no less optimistic than that of Emerson, the sage she loved; and where another person would have been sad from a thousand tender fears, she was almost always buoyant with the hope that in God's own good time, Abelard and she would be able to share each other's lives as

intimately and truly as their hearts could wish.

Three weeks flew by, weeks filled with bonfires, with a multiplicity of small household duties, with tender care for her mistress — who would sometimes fall in a terrible fit before the sympathetic nurse could so much as put forth her hand to break the fall — and with repairs, usually of a petty order.

A great philosopher has declared that if life were not so full of surprises it would not be worth living. Assuredly, Heloise had, of late, been treated to a series of startling surprises, some of so serious a nature that they might have been called shocks.

First had come the sudden death of a dear girl friend. Then had followed the shock of her father's illness, which had called her quickly to his side; and while with him came the thrilling surprise which the dart of Love never fails to give — to be followed by a shock as bitter, almost, as the other had been sweet — that of her father's sudden death.

This last, together with the knowledge that she loved and was loved in return, had caused her to remove from one side of America to the other in search of the home her fancy dictated. She expected to live an uneventful life for some years, filled with what most people would call common duties, common delights, and common thoughts. And then, perhaps, America would

be ready to wed her sons and daughters on a plane of equality. Ah, what a new world this would open up to Abelard and herself, and to all of America's brave sons and noble daughters.

This sweet dream was, however, rudely dispelled by a new shock almost as great as any that had preceded it, the arrival of a big official-looking letter, the reading of which caused Heloise's face to grow very pale and the reluctant tears to gather in her lovely eyes.

Mrs. Hall, perceiving her agitation, and feeling a vague alarm that this mysterious-looking document meant mischief, and would perhaps deprive her of an attendant to whom she had become warmly attached, said anxiously:

"Dear Heloise, tell me quickly — is anything wrong?"

They were seated underneath the big tree in front of the house. It was late in the afternoon; the sun was setting and cast long shadows across the bright landscape.

"My brother died a month ago," said Heloise, as she knelt by her mistress's side and buried her face in her lap.

At that moment his death seemed a crushing event to the weeping girl, for she had come West with the secret hope in her breast that after all her brother might be alive and that there might be a romantic reunion. It is true, she had only the vaguest of memories of him, as they had

been separated since she was but a girl of ten, and since the day when he ran away from the school where his father had placed him no news of him had reached home — during all the years that had passed. And now he was dead and buried. Two of the five children had died in infancy. Her mother and one child had passed away quickly after the separation of her parents, and now her father and the last son were gone. She alone remained of a group of seven.

Mrs. Hall stroked the sunny brown hair of the kneeling girl, but presently she began to sway over the side of the chair until her head nearly reached the ground. Instantly Heloise rose, and succeeded in getting the afflicted woman's body in a more comfortable position by removing her chair, so that she could lie flat on the grass until the attack was relaxed.

While Heloise obeyed her employer implicitly and promptly as a rule, there was one matter in which she would have her own way. She persisted in not only watching her anxiously at the periods when she was in the grip of her terrible foe, but would pillow her head in her soft lap, stroking her forehead, and smiling her tenderest smile when the stony face began to brighten with intelligence. So finally Mrs. Hall gave up trying to coerce her and found herself giving a ghostly smile in return.

To-day, there being a suspicious redness

about Heloise's eyes, as she smiled when her mistress's face resumed its usual look, Mrs. Hall, having forgotten what had taken place before her attack, asked:

"What is the matter? Are you ill?"

"No, I am as well as usual. The news of my brother's death has made me sad."

"Oh, forgive me, Heloise! Will his death have any effect on your life?" asked Mrs. Hall, as Heloise helped her to a seat.

"Yes, it will make a great difference."

"How? Will you have to leave me? Oh, don't tell me that! I am just beginning to enjoy life once more."

"Would you like to read my letter?" asked Heloise.

"No, I think not. I prefer you should tell me the substance of it. My head is not very clear and my eyes are dim."

"Well, the letter acquaints me with the fact of my brother's death and tells me that he has made me his heir. It seems he was a man of many affairs. The writer urges me to come to Denver at once and look after my new possessions."

"Ah, my God! I guessed it! I was sure that big envelope meant no good to me!" Mrs Hall burst into tears.

"Don't be too sure that the contents of the big envelope means no good to you and yours.

Wait a little before judging," said Heloise, with a mysterious look, so unusual for her, in truth, that Mrs. Hall stopped weeping and looked at her in an inquiring manner. "Something that will mean a good deal to somebody not far away is in that mysterious packet. Well, well, wait a few days — and then see if you feel like crying. In the meantime I will get you something to eat." Heloise glanced at her watch. "It's high time!" she added, as she kissed Mrs. Hall lightly on the brow and disappeared quickly into the house.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ANGEL IN THE WILDERNESS



"LOVE heeds not caste, nor sleep a broken bed."
"I WENT in search of love and lost myself."
Hindu Proverbs.

XIII

The Angel in the Wilderness

THE Bible has often been used as a means of coercion, some of it for hundreds of years; a part of it for several thousand.

When Heloise told her mistress that her brother's solicitors had sent her a cheque in case she might need some money with which to expedite her preparations for a more or less prolonged stay in Colorado, where her brother's property was largely located, she begged to be allowed to spend the money in completing what she had begun — the transformation of a neglected home into a well-kept one. At first Mrs. Hall firmly refused this generous offer, making innumerable objections, and as Heloise's time was short and she wished to accomplish much more before she bade her kind mistress adieu, she had recourse to the Bible to help her gain her ends, remembering how her husband had wooed her.

She underlined the words, "Freely as ye have received, freely give," and carried the book to her. Mrs. Hall put on her glasses and read the marked verse carefully.

"But are you sure, my dear, that there are no

heavy encumbrances on the property you are getting? I know a good many people who have a lot of property, but so mortgaged that their lives are worried out of them to raise the interest when it is due. My daughter's husband might be alive to-day if it had not been for the mortgage on his property. It kept him constantly behind and harried him into his grave. And now my daughter is trying to carry on the business and is dying of that same burden. Heaven only knows what will become of her poor children!"

Mrs. Hall sank into one of her gloomy reveries, and forgot all about the newly underscored words in her Bible.

"I fear you have forgotten your Bible. Pray read the underlined portion over again," begged Heloise, with a pretty supplicating look in her eyes; "and do not fear," she went on, "but that I shall receive freely. Indeed, I gather from the letter that my income is to be a very large one. The Bible also affirms that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' Surely, you will not deprive me of this joy?" They had just finished their morning meal and Heloise was eager to turn her cheque into money, and the money into various delightful improvements which had occurred to her since her stay with Mrs. Hall.

Being urged again, Mrs. Hall deliberately

read the underlined words over once more, for she had lost her once tenacious memory, and her mind was sometimes all confusion.

"Yes, yes, the Bible is right," she said finally. "And since you are sure you have received freely, you may do as you like in my poor decaying little home."

Heloise rose and kissed her affectionately on her brow. The next morning while she was performing certain little labors of love it was decided that Mrs. Hall should spend the day with her daughter, so as to leave Heloise at liberty to go to Pasadena and procure such assistance as she required to carry out her plans.

Having seen Mrs. Hall safely in her daughter's care, Heloise proceeded to an employment office which had been recommended to her, and obtained a promise that all the people she required should be despatched to Mrs. Hall's abode within two days at the outside. Next, she went to one of Mrs. Hall's sons, who was a contractor in a small way, and engaged him to buy for her a trusty horse of mature years, and an easy but not expensive carriage which would seat four at a pinch.

There still remained in her pocket a long list of household necessities to be bought, mostly articles of small expense, but which, properly used, add greatly to the comfort of a home. Some of them were great time-savers, a precious

quality in the eyes of Heloise, who looked upon those who invent them as among the greatest benefactors of the race.

Four o'clock had struck before she could rejoin Mrs. Hall at her daughter's home, which was close to the store which she had taken on her shoulders since her husband's death. Only one person was in the store, a young lad, the son of the proprietress. He too left his post to follow his grandmother's nurse into the house, where all were making merry over the good news brought to them by "grandma."

Heloise found herself quickly surrounded by a group which included the small, black-eyed, energetic daughter, Mrs. Smith, all her five children, and some people who seemed much at home and were probably either neighbors or good customers, or perhaps both. All gave Heloise admiring glances, while Mrs. Smith poured out sincere thanks without measure; thanks which took a pathetic turn and quickly brought tears to the eyes of the susceptible members of the group.

Perceiving that the affair was becoming too serious, Heloise began to insist that there were no thanks due her from any one; that she was simply doing what she enjoyed, and what every healthy person liked to do if he had a chance.

"What is that?" asked one of the boys.

"Spending money!" replied Heloise promptly.

"You bet! I wish I had some to spend!"

"And I!" shouted another, who was followed by a general chorus of "I too!"

Seeing that the children were getting out of hand, Mrs. Smith interposed, saying:

"But you must first learn to be industrious and responsible like this young lady; after that perhaps you will find yourselves with something to spend."

Silence followed this speech, for Mrs. Hall had passed most of the day telling how perseveringly Heloise had worked until she had rid the whole place of weeds, and how she had loosened the soil and applied the well-rotted manure to many a perishing plant. As her daughter had frequently urged her boys to go to their grandmother's and pull up some of the weeds, and as they had resisted, saying, "Oh, they'll grow right up again! What's the use?" they felt condemned; hence their silence, which Heloise broke by asking one of the lads, who had a book in his hands, if he liked to read.

"You bet he likes to read! He's good for nothing else!" half shouted the elder brother.

"Do you go to school?"

"No; we're too poor."

"Is there no public school near?" asked Heloise, glancing at his mother as she spoke.

"Not very near — besides I have neither the

time nor the money to spare to keep him dressed up like the rest of the children. So he stays at home and does errands."

"Ah, that seems too bad!" said Heloise thoughtfully.

She said no more in regard to the matter until she accompanied Mrs. Hall and her daughter into another room when they were about to leave. Then she rapidly spoke of a little plan that had suggested itself to her. She began by asking Mrs. Smith if she would be willing her book-loving lad should see that the weeds did not again get the upper hand in his grandmother's place, provided she made him a present of a bicycle and guaranteed him nice clothes and a little money to spend each month. Mrs. Smith was delighted with the proposition, and called Horace in to show Heloise how happy he would be and how ready to accept her offer.

That young rascal no sooner heard the matter through than he rushed out — not even stopping to thank Heloise — to shout his good luck to his companions. This caused a general hubbub, in the midst of which Heloise and Mrs. Hall made their escape.

On the way home they saw everywhere beautiful well-kept orange groves and fine picturesque grounds in the midst of which were charming residences. At last they came in sight of Mrs. Hall's place, which no longer presented

the appearance of an unweeded garden, but which was still, in comparison with the rest of the neighborhood, a sort of blot.

"My poor little home! My poor little home!" sighed Mrs. Hall. "I fear it was an unlucky day for you when you entered my little patch of thorns and thistles. You may get ill from overwork and need for yourself the money you are spending on it."

While she was speaking, Heloise opened the rickety gate for her, and as she did so it impolitely tumbled flat on the ground. Heloise immediately picked it up and with Mrs. Hall's help replaced it, laughingly saying as she did so:

"Oh, it was your weeds and burrs that developed the spirit of enterprise in me. If your home had been a little paradise I might still be a dreamy time-server, performing my routine of commonplace duties in a tame, conventional manner. Thank heaven, I say, for nature's tendency to be ever relapsing into a wilderness!"

Having unlocked the front door for Mrs. Hall, Heloise passed on through the cottage to the walk through the back yard, which was flanked by great black patches where once had flourished the survival of the unfittest. She found that the lumber man had kept his word, for there were shingles in the barn for re-covering the roof and lumber for other repairs.

"A good beginning!" she said to herself, as

she walked back to prepare a little supper. She was very hungry, having eaten merely a "stand-up" lunch in the middle of the day, and after supper she was so tired that she was obliged to desist from her preparations for the advent of a group of assistants that were coming bright and early on the morrow.

"It seems a pity that one has to spend so much time in sleep," she said later when bedtime had come.

"I can't agree with you, my dear. I am always hoping I can sleep. It's the dreary time trying to sleep, with all the bitter memories haunting me, which make life a burden."

"Ah, but suppose you try pulling weeds for a change and give the fancy work a rest, and take the new remedy we learned of the other day? Who knows but that after a while sleep would turn about and woo *you!*"

Mrs. Hall turned to Heloise and gave that persistent young woman a real smile in place of the usual ghostly one. Then she said with more animation than she had yet shown:

"I am seriously thinking of taking your advice. God does not seem to want me to die yet, and perhaps he has sent you here to help me to get well. Yes, I will take the medicine regularly and I will help my grandson keep the weeds down."

Heloise was so delighted to hear these prom-

ises that she put her arms about the woman's neck and kissed her repeatedly. Then she found her place in the Bible and read as usual until Mrs. Hall was fast asleep. Heloise was pleased that one chapter — and a short one at that — was sufficient. As for herself she prayed as earnestly as usual for the happiness of her dear Abelard, and having done so fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow.

She rose, however, the next morning as fresh as if her days were being passed in Paradise. The first hours were spent in putting out some new plants that had arrived too late to be attended to the evening before. This was a labor of love, and Heloise smiled as she thought how surprised and delighted Mrs. Hall would be when they greeted her with their first offerings of exquisite blossoms. This little job finished, she wondered if the new hose had been brought up. She washed her hands and proceeded to look under the house. Ah, yes, there it lay, a great coil of it, wire-covered and somewhat heavy to manage, but too substantial to spring a leak and give one a sudden shower bath; or to be always turning the driveway or walk into a small river, when it should be conducting a stream of cold water to the roots of some thirsty tree.

The next hour which Heloise spent in the garden was a delicious one. The fresh morn-

ing air was an intoxicant of the finest kind. Then the stillness which reigned, broken only by the songs of birds, was so sweet. Every liberated plant, every bush which she had dug about and given an extra tip by way of well-rotted manure, seemed to be eloquently thanking her. She felt the grateful acknowledgments of help received, and recognized the graceful promises to pay in return many fold. It was only when she went to the back of the house to do some necessary watering that a shadow came over the brightness of her face, brought there by the black desolation which the scene presented. There was not a living weed to be seen, but there were plain evidences of the hot fires in which she had burned them, and many charred roots threatened more trouble unless dealt with rigidly and promptly.

"What sinners they were, to be sure," she said to herself as she looked. "They had no conscience. They took all, giving nothing in return. It is necessary to totally destroy them. To-day will see a complete routing of them, root and branch, I'm thinking, for the man with the plough is coming and the landscape gardener, and soon there will be nothing to remind one of their embittering and tyrannical existence. But 'Rest in Peace,' all ye departed weeds and burrs! Ye grew and multiplied

after your kind, only the kind was unfit for my lady's garden and ye had to go!"

Here the shrill whistle sounded and Heloise's parting reflections in connection with the weeds and burrs were cut short. She placed the nozzle of her hose so that a certain big tree could get its fill of liquid nourishment, and went into the house to get Mrs. Hall's breakfast.

That was the last meal Heloise ever prepared for her mistress; for during the day the new nurse put in an appearance and took the culinary part of the labors off her hands; thus giving her the more time to superintend the repairs of the premises.

The first workmen to arrive were the two men who were to put a new roof on the barn, hang the doors and give them good locks; also make a chicken house and covered run for the half-dozen choice fowls and rooster that Heloise had bought. Then came the man with his horse and plough and soon after the landscape gardener. Then the man with the shears put in an appearance and was soon making the tall, straggling hedge about the premises a straight, neatly-clipped wall of beauty. At one o'clock came a couple of painters who set to work with their brushes.

For a whole week most of this busy group remained, eating their dinners out of their tin pails under a big tree in the back-yard and being

treated, in addition, to excellent coffee and fresh fruit. The three women, Mrs. Hall, Heloise, and Mrs. Redmond, the new nurse, ate theirs in the house and were only a little less merry than the men outside; for the nurse was full of Irish wit, and was brimming over with funny stories; which she poured out with a voluble tongue. Mrs. Hall seemed to like her very much, and even occasionally laughed at her.

While Heloise took out the men's coffee to them, Mrs. Redmond improved the opportunity to find out all she could about the person whose shoes she was to fill.

"That's a very handsome nurse you've got. Where did you pick her up?" she began.

"My son engaged her in Los Angeles. She had splendid testimonials as to training and character. I believe, though, her father was the only patient she had nursed, outside of hospital walls, until she came to me."

"It is odd she came to this lonely place, where there's nobody to look at her! But she seems to have soon tired of the job. That's the way with young and handsome women. They are as capricious and changeable as an April day."

"Heloise is not leaving me because she wishes to go," replied Mrs. Hall in a slightly offended tone.

"Why, then? You give her a good salary, considering the work, and your home will be a

sweet, pretty place as soon as your workmen are done with it. I suppose you would even increase her salary in order to keep her? You seem greatly attached to her."

Mrs. Hall hesitated for a moment as to the reply she should make. She was sure Heloise would not wish the new nurse to know that she was the one who was turning the old and dilapidated place into a pretty, cozy home, and she herself did not wish to pose as an object of charity.

Finally she said, "It is an important business matter which is taking Heloise away from me so soon. Her brother has lately died and his affairs have to be put into shape."

"Oh! — that accounts for her mourning clothes and her sad looks, when she is not smiling. I thought she had some secret sorrow, but supposed it was merely some love affair that was not going to her liking. She's at an age when a woman's mind is full of love fancies. It is dangerous to depend on such for help. Better to pick out a strong woman, not too old, — in the neighborhood of fifty or sixty, like myself."

Mrs. Hall was saved the necessity of supplying further details regarding Heloise, by the return of the object of their conversation.

It was the men's turn to discuss Heloise, now that her back was turned.

"Mighty good coffee this, and it tastes none the worse for being handed to a fellow by a mighty pretty young woman. Where did she come from?"

It was the gardener who asked the question. He was a tall young fellow of twenty-three or thereabouts, with a well-browned skin, high, full forehead, dreamy eyes and a handsome mustache. He was dressed in a picturesque manner and was full of artistic conceits. He aimed to become a landscape gardener second to none.

"She came from around Boston, they tell me," the man of the plough answered. His name was Twinkel, and it suited him well in some respects. His eyes were small, and he had a shrewd come-and-go smile.

"From Boston! There must be some mistake. I'll wager you anything that those fine arms, that well-molded bust and those glorious lips were never developed in Massachusetts — or any other New England State. What do you bet?" demanded the picturesque young gardener.

"Put your money away. I'll find out all about her for you — if that's what you want. But there's no use in your a-settin' your affection on her, Banks, for she's going to Denver in five or six days for good."

All the men looked disappointed at this piece

of information — with one exception — that of the man who did the pruning. He had some little grudge that morning against the gardener and enjoyed his look of disappointment.

"That's not giving a fellow a fair chance," replied the crestfallen Mr. Banks.

"Why? Did you think you could hypnotize her with those dreamy eyes of yours?" chuckled Twinkel.

"She might go farther and do worse," spoke up one of the shinglers. He was a small, weazened man with a profound admiration for the stalwart Banks.

"So I say," agreed Twinkel. "But there's no telling what sort of a beast a woman will fall in love with. There's that Lucretia Snow, the loveliest creature God ever made, I'm a-thinkin', who has just thrown herself into the arms of that dark, coarse-haired, sullen half-breed, whose mother is a full-blooded Indian, — and only because the fellow is rich. Heavens! Think what her children will be like — half Indian — often worse than the real Indians!"

A rather coarse laugh followed this speech, which, however, had apparently not been heard by Mr. Banks, as he asked:

"How did you learn that this handsome young woman is not going to remain here much longer, Twinkel?"

"Oh, I got around the old woman — told

her she was improvin' her own looks as fast as the looks of the place. Told her she must have a rare good nurse and that I hoped she knew enough to hold on to a good thing when she'd got it."

"What did she say? Tell me every word!"

"Well, she said she knew she was an exceptionally good nurse, — in fact she never again expected to meet her equal. But she said she might as well cry for the moon as try to keep the young lady with her. It seems she has fallen heir to some property and must go to Denver to look after it. So you see it's all up with you, Banks! She will be surrounded by an army of fortune-hunters."

"Fortune-hunters! Why, a fellow would be passing rich to secure her love and hand without a penny in her pocket! I'd take her fast enough on those conditions. But she ought to have a throne from which to sway the destiny of multitudes of God's creatures."

"Would you like to install her as mistress of that pretty cottage of yours, with them fairy-like grounds attached? That *would* be a good settlin' for her — by Jove!"

"I think so, too!" said Banks, pulling out a case containing cigarettes. Having lighted one, he subsided into a dreamy reverie as he watched the smoke curl upward into the light, delicate atmosphere.

CHAPTER XIV
REPUBLICAN ROYALTIES



"YOUR days are freely devoted to foolish amusements and useless actions, interminable toilet-making, seances with dressmakers, dinners, pink teas, so-called literary lectures, receptions, balls and theaters.

"You spend your time in gossip which is stupid when it is not wicked.

"You grovel with astonishing alacrity to gain admittance into social circles above your own, and cannot conceal your asinine contempt for people supposedly below yourselves.

"This is the sort of life a society woman leads." — *Zola.*

"As long as our civilization is essentially one of property, of fences, of exclusiveness, it will be mocked by delusions. Our riches will leave us sick; there will be bitterness in our laughter, and our wine will burn our mouth. Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open and which serves all men." — *Emerson.*

"COME what may," said an Englishman to me not long ago, "we are bound to possess the wealth of the American millionaires, in the long run, through the American women."

XIV

Republican Royalties



THE next day the young gardener had a much better opportunity to secure an occasional glance and word from "the young mistress" than he had on the day preceding, as the man with the plough and the man with the shears, who had claimed some notice from her, had finished their jobs and gone away.

Banks was charmed to find that their ideas as to the laying out of the burr field was precisely the same. In matters of taste, if he made a suggestion Heloise was sure to think it "just the thing," while if she had an inspiration in regard to the arrangement of a certain plot he promptly replied that "nothing could be better," that her suggestion was "a stroke of genius." And it gradually came to pass that Mrs. Hall superintended the improvements taking place within the house, while Heloise was left, more and more, to look after the remodeling of the grounds.

On the third day Alfred, while finishing his dinner, had an inspiration. He hoped it would turn out successfully. It was nothing less than to invite Mrs. Hall and Heloise to visit that same

evening his own garden, one of the most beautiful, for its size, of the numerous enchanting spots in South California. Accordingly, when Heloise was pouring out his coffee, he said with decision:

"I'm not sure but that you could get an idea or two for this place by taking a glance at my garden, and I shall be happy to escort you and Mrs. Hall to my little place, if you will go — say this evening — after my day's work is done. It is not far from here."

"I should be delighted!" promptly replied Heloise, beaming down upon the young gardener in the frankest, most unsuspicious manner. She had run out of the house without her hat, as the big tree where the men ate their dinners was not far from the kitchen door. The lower part of her face was a shade less fair than when she came to Mrs. Hall's, but it only served to throw into greater relief her lovely brow and beautiful white teeth. Her rosy lips and charming smile were ever the same, and her fine eyes had an added brilliancy.

"I will speak at once to Mrs. Hall, and if she would like to go we shall be ready as soon as tea is finished," and Heloise went off to the house.

Alfred rushed after her and caught up just in time to open the door for her. Then he said pleadingly:

"Do not wait to make tea. My father gets

so lonesome nowadays eating by himself, with only a Chinese boy about. Let him give us a cup of the real article and a roll and a fresh-laid egg and some strawberries. It will be a welcome change for him, I assure you!"

"I will ask Mrs. Hall at once. Come with me! We will ask her together!" said Heloise impulsively.

Alfred needed no urging. He was only too glad to follow Heloise into the dismantled little dining-room where Mrs. Hall was slowly drinking her coffee. The new nurse, having finished hers, was busy in the parlor, where some painting and varnishing was being done.

"Dear Mrs. Hall," began Heloise, "Mr. Banks, it appears, has a very nice, well-planned garden of his own. He thinks we could get some excellent hints for your grounds by seeing it, and has kindly offered to take us there this evening. It is not far, you know, and the evenings are gorgeous. What do you say? Would you like to go?"

"And drink some real Chinese tea brewed by a *bona fide* Chinaman?" put in Banks.

Mrs. Hall adjusted her glasses and gave the two young people a very serious look before she replied. She was wondering whether she dared accept the invitation and run the risk of having one of her "spells," and spoiling everybody's pleasure.

"Oh, do let us go!" interposed Heloise, coming to her side and smoothing her hair.

"Certainly, if you wish. But it is a risky business — taking me anywhere. I might scare the old man and the little Chinaman out of their senses. The enemy is most likely to seize me whenever I am having an unusually good time."

"Fear nothing, and don't think about it!" replied the young man, giving Mrs. Hall one of his brightest smiles. He was overjoyed by the splendid beginning he was making for the end he had in view. Many women he knew had been tempted to wed men they had not greatly cared for just to secure a home. If he could get the woman he wanted even on such terms he would trust to the future and to his steadfast devotion to bring about a return of his loyal affection.

The hour appointed for the ramble having arrived, Alfred tapped at the front door, which was partly open. The hard-working landscape gardener had been transformed into an elegant gentleman of artistic tastes, for Alfred carried his love of the arts into the matter of personal raiment. He suggested the artist even when at work with a hoe, a rake, or a spade in his hands, and when he was not thus engaged it pleased him to shine as a well-dressed gentleman, with a touch of the artist in his make-up. Hence, he always carried about with him on his

trips a valise which held either his suit of working clothes or his "society outfit," as it was popularly dubbed; so that either might serve his purpose when he was detained several days on a job.

As he tapped lightly at the front door, Heloise entered the hall from the sitting-room. She smiled and begged him to be seated in the porch a moment while she helped Mrs. Hall to don her bonnet and scarf. She herself was attired in her traveling suit, plain garments made of mourning material, without any touch of art or indeed of what might be called style. The truth is, that Heloise, while temperamentally loving all things beautiful, had not yet given much attention to the art of dress, nor indeed to many other æsthetic things wrought by the hand of man. Thus far she had been merely a seeker of truth for truth's sake, and for utilitarian rather than æsthetic purposes.

When the two ladies joined Alfred on the front porch, he greeted Mrs. Hall deferentially, as was his habit with people who had in any way an infirmity to bear. But on turning to Heloise he gave her at first a very critical look and then a roguish smile. She felt that something was wrong and blushed a rosy pink.

"Do you know, Miss Mills?" he said at length, "that I consider you a great sinner?"

"Yes, of course, but of what kind? Your

eyes tell me that you think me a dowdy." She smiled, but she felt uncomfortable.

"Worse — a downright *sinner!* Heaven has given into your keeping its most beautiful gifts, but you set them aside as if they were of no value, or you actually try to conceal them! Take your hair: how abundant, how lovely the shade, how full of vitality and life it is, and yet, though it pleads with you for a little freedom and artistic treatment, you draw it tightly back from your forehead and as tightly pin it in a knot at the back of your head. And you clap down over your lovely forehead a plain, narrow-rimmed sailor hat, fit only for boys and ugly girls who look like boys. As a last insult to your beauty you wear a somber garment which some woman who has mistaken her calling has spoiled in the making," he protested as they stood on the porch.

"They were made by a poor woman who has the best heart in the world. She is a dear good creature."

"Doubtless she is all that — but she should make bags, not dresses. She aims too high. She must be conceited, despite her goodness of heart."

"I am sorry my appearance does not please you," said Heloise, leading the way to the gate. She was surprised and somewhat vexed by the young man's frank comments, his disregard of

conventional manners. She had been brought up to look upon one's outside appearance as of small consequence, compared with the right development of the inner being, but being sensitive and having a lively imagination, she now exaggerated the figure she was cutting in the eyes of this crudely fastidious young man.

"Heloise always looks and is exquisitely neat, and that is the important thing. I have seen very stylishly dressed men and women who were not really clean, and whose houses were actually dirty."

Mrs. Hall had not relished the frank criticism of her favorite and spoke more seriously than the occasion required.

Banks tried to mollify her by saying with energy:

"My dear Mrs. Hall, you must not think I am finding fault with your lovely friend. I recognized her worth and the rare type of her beauty the moment my eye fell on her, but I love to see a beautiful gem properly set. My real quarrel is with the dear, good creature who has done her best to spoil the fine, stately figure of Miss Mills," insisted Alfred, as they walked on.

"Ah, but if you only knew this good woman, Mr. Banks," quickly responded Heloise. "Her life has been a very pathetic one. She married the man she loved — he was poor — and ac-

cepted his lot with the grace of a saint. She bore him three sweet children. When the youngest was a chubby bit of humanity and had just reached the age of six months, her husband was killed while at work. On account of some trifling carelessness on his part, she could procure no damages. Their little cottage happened to be hers. She was obliged to mortgage it in order to bury her husband decently. Then began her struggle for a living, with unskilled fingers, with no time for preliminary training, for she was a brave, high-spirited woman and could not bear to become an object of charity.

"As she wished to keep her children with her, she could think of no way of making a living but by taking in sewing which some friends undertook to procure for her. One of her friends appealed to me, telling me the woman's story at the same time. I said I had no plain sewing on hand, unless a plain traveling dress could be so classed. The lady looked me over and said she thought one for me would come under that head! I gave her my material with the result that you see."

"You would have done better to have made the woman a present of the money and sent your gown to a regular dressmaker, for she has not only spoiled your good material but made you look countrified. It is not right!"—Alfred

added suddenly. "Do *I* look like a clod-hopper?"

"No, I can't say that you do." Heloise found it impossible not to laugh, for the young man seemed to await her reply very seriously, as if it were a matter of great importance.

"On the contrary, I look like a gentleman. Is it not true?"

"It is," repeated Heloise demurely, fearing to give him pain if she showed that she did not realize the importance of a subject he seemed to have so deeply at heart.

"And *you* might look like a queen! — if you gave proper attention to your clothes!" he persisted.

"A society queen I suppose you mean, since American institutions do not permit us to indulge in the real article. But the question arises, would it pay for me to add myself to the already large number of queens America is at present supporting; for you must admit that a multitude of queens is an expensive luxury for a republic, especially as American queens are not satisfied to reign at home but must try to rule in foreign capitals at America's expense. You see I am a true American. Before I indulge myself in any caprice or yield to a prompting of head or heart, I have fallen into the habit of asking myself, 'Will it pay?' Now, I can't see that it would pay either me or the country I love so

well to become what is called a 'society girl.' What do you think?"

"Oh, I'm not in love with the sham article any more than you are. As a rule American queens are, as you say, too expensive, too irresponsible, a class that our country has often reason to be ashamed of. I merely meant that nature having given you beauty, you should aid and abet her — you should follow her cue — or at any rate not try to thwart her. I beg your pardon for being so frank!"

"And I beg yours for spoiling our little outing, which was to have been so pleasant. I should have been more considerate of your tastes, though I have not much of a wardrobe from which to make a selection. However, I think this is the most ill-fitting and ogre-like gown it contains. You see what a penalty you pay for being an artist."

"But, on the other hand, there are compensations. Nature is an inexhaustible source of pleasure, and men and women are becoming more artistic every day. Now, there's a pretty picture for an artist to enjoy!"

Alfred pointed with his cane to a young woman who was working among some plants in a field on the opposite side of the road. She wore a garden suit of rough cloth, made in a picturesque manner, a large coquettish-looking hat, gauntlet gloves, and stout shoes. She was

manipulating a daintily made hoe in a manner that filled Heloise with amazement — possibly with a little envy — as she recalled her own big, ungainly hoe, which would persist in divorcing itself from its handle whenever she got enthusiastic over her work. Then Heloise's long dress and skirt were always getting in the way, no matter how well she pinned them up at the start. The comparison made her sigh as she looked at this woman—she seemed to fit in so well with the landscape!

"The woman looks almost as well out of doors with a hoe as Heloise does indoors with a broom and with her long apron on, always so well starched and fleckless," said the loyal Mrs. Hall.

Heloise colored slightly. "I am glad I look well in the house, since I'm such a dowdy on the street. But does it pay to make a business of gardening, as I suppose this one is doing?"

Alfred, thus appealed to, turned his eyes from the pretty scene to Heloise, and after wrinkling his brow a moment said rather hesitatingly:

"Oh, some of them make it pay and some don't. That woman we have been watching makes money. She sold about one hundred and fifty dollars' worth of blackberries alone last season, from some fifty or so plants she had. On some of her flowers she does even better. A new strain of carnation brings her sometimes as much as a dollar and a half a dozen blossoms.

Women out here run all sorts of places, from big milk ranches to small plats of ground no bigger than a town lot. Small fruit farming is doubtless their safest investment, as the raising of raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries of the best varieties can never be overdone. — Ah, here we are! This is my little place, and father, you see, is at the gate, waiting for my return. Time hangs heavily on his hands sometimes, and I am all that is left to him of a rather numerous family."

"Dear father," he went on, "I have brought you some company to cheer you up a little. This lady is Mrs. Hall, a near neighbor of ours, and the young lady is Miss Mills. Ladies, let me introduce you to the best father in the world!"

CHAPTER XV
IN PARADISE



"THE revelation of God to man is progressive, for every fresh advance in knowledge of the world in which we live contributes to our knowledge of our Maker." — *W. T. Stead.*

"SCIENCE will soon make the miracles of Christ elementary."

A RELIGION which teaches the suppression of the many and the saving of the few, is endorsed by political measures which put this religion into practice in a commercial way. — *M. I. T.*

XV

In Paradise



"FATHER BANKS" shook hands with Mrs. Hall in a manner so dignified as to approach stateliness, and said in his formal way:

"You are very welcome."

Mrs. Hall merely said "Thank you." Her mind was troubled. She was thinking what an incongruous, undignified, and demoralizing thing it would be for her to fall into a fit in this little paradise of a garden, with the stately "father" sitting in judgment on her, — she was sure it would be severe from the set of his features, — while the artistic son would receive a shock from which he might not be able to rid himself for many days; if indeed it would not be always a haunting memory.

She turned to Heloise, and grasping her elbow said in a timid voice:

"Dear Heloise, I feel ill. I think I would like to return and take some medicine which always relieves me."

"Certainly! We will return at once," said Heloise.

This conversation was overheard by Alfred,

who was so eager for Heloise to see his gem-like home that he promptly interposed:

"Dear Mrs. Hall, if you must return, please accept me as your escort instead of Miss Mills. It would be too bad for her not to see the garden now that she is here. I will take you in the buggy. Not a word by way of protest, Miss Mills! I am accustomed to have my own way in my own place. Father, while you are talking to these ladies, I will help John harness up. I will be back in five minutes!"

Both Heloise and Mrs. Hall tried their best to get in a word, but Alfred was away before either of them could get under headway, and they paused, feeling that it was probably useless to try to stop a young man so determined, and who asked nobody's leave.

"I shall insist on accompanying you," said Heloise, turning to Mrs. Hall.

"Oh, Heloise, there is no need! though I always like to have you with me. Somehow I feel safer. But Mrs. Redmond is there and this young man has set his heart on showing you his beautiful place. It would be a pity to disappoint him. Besides, I don't feel very sick."

The elderly Mr. Banks left them for a few minutes—thinking they might wish to say a few words privately,—to pull off some leaves which were turning to an ominous yellow on a cherished shrub, and Mrs. Hall embraced the oppor-

tunity and admitted that she was not really ill, only afraid she might be.

Then she added with quite unusual vehemence, "I simply can't bear the thought that I might any instant drop at the feet of that savage old man, and wake to consciousness with a new bitterness in my heart. He would secretly curse me for daring to enter this place—I who am supposed by some to be subject to a devil. He is the kind of person who would very likely think it, too. No, I will not stay. I will banish myself before giving that severe old gentleman an opportunity to wish me in purgatory."

"I really think I had better go with you," insisted Heloise. "You *might* need me."

"We shall reach home in a very few minutes. The chances of my enemy overtaking me are small. And the young man would, I am sure, rather take this risk than lose the delight of your company in his own house. He wants, moreover, to hear you praise this lovely garden, which is evidently very dear to him; it is better that you remain. You will have a lot to tell me when you return to-night, or in the morning, if I happen to be dozing when you come."

Before Heloise could reply, the one-seated, top-covered buggy with its dashing, high-spirited horse was at the gate.

The old gentleman politely assisted Mrs. Hall into it, and as soon as she was seated Alfred

drove off at a quick pace, merely waving Heloise a graceful salute, and not daring to stop to speak with her. He was desperately afraid she would insist upon returning with her mistress, and he was determined to leave no loophole by which she could effect her purpose. Once let a pretty woman begin to plead with a man and that man is lost, he considered.

Father Banks lost no time in making the acquaintance of Heloise. He really enjoyed the society of young women, as is apt to be the case with old men, and he thought this one a fine specimen of healthy, happy womanhood; and he made up his mind that if his son had taken "a shine" to her, he would do all *he* could to help him secure the prize. The place needed a woman and some prattling children to make of it a real home. Father Banks was sure he would make an excellent — perhaps even an indulgent — grandfather, as he had made what he considered an excellent father. Perhaps he had erred on the side of severity, but that was better than to be so lax that children would not only run over their own parents, but everybody else, and end in making bad citizens.

Father Banks did not immediately call Heloise's attention to the beautiful garden, which his son and himself had brought to the highest state of perfection, but sought her opinion of

South California, "in which you now find yourself for the first time."

Her replies were as enthusiastic as he could desire. She finished an eloquent little speech of praise by saying:

"I think it is not only 'God's own country,' but a paradise for woman, too. Everything here coaxes her to do her best, and in this balmy air and amidst these lovely scenes her highest development ought to be reached — and by her side man should attain his!"

Silence fell for a moment after this outburst, which had surprised Heloise herself no less than Father Banks; for she was not ordinarily what might be called an impulsive or even an enthusiastic person. The influences of her life had been against that.

"I perceive that you are for woman's rights, young lady. That is strange, because the minds of marriageable girls are usually too occupied with the mysteries of love to care for those of politics."

Heloise blushed and replied in a deprecatory manner:

"I hope I am no more firm for the rights of woman than I am for those of man. I hope I am no partisan, though I do dislike monopolies — the monopoly of the weak by the strong — of the colored by the white — of the feminine by the masculine."

Just then the sound of approaching wheels caused a break in the conversation, and before it could be resumed Alfred had rejoined them.

"How did you leave Mrs. Hall?" was Heloise's first question.

"The old lady seemed to be all right after she left here. I think she must have been afraid of you, father. You *can* look very severe. I'll bet you were afraid she would tumble on some of your floral pets and smash them."

Father Banks smiled for the first time, showing as he did so a fine set of "store teeth." Though much wrinkled and as brown as the sun could make him, he was yet a clear-eyed, handsome old man, with just a perceptible stoop in his tall, athletic frame.

"I confess I can't endure an epileptic. Such people ought to be kept out of sight. I don't see how a young woman like you, Miss Mills," he said, turning to Heloise, "can associate so intimately with an old creature who seems to be the sport of some malignant spirit — as the neighbors say." Father Banks gave Heloise his most severe look.

That young woman smiled pleasantly in return, but said nothing.

"Don't take father at first glance valuation, Miss Mills," interposed Alfred. "He lives so much with nature that bluntness of speech has become second nature with him."

"Which only goes to prove that every advantage is balanced by some loss. Even the shallow amenities of polite life serve as oil to keep the social machinery running smoothly," was Heloise's smiling rejoinder. Her imperturbable good humor seemed to act as an irritant on the old man. He said:

"Why, you must have the nervous system of an ox!"

"Or the digestion of one," put in Heloise, laughing merrily. "But seriously, I think men and women look upon physical infirmities differently. As a rule, a mother loves her weakest child the best. A father, on the contrary, worships the strongest, the one best adapted to 'get on in the world.' I have not much doubt but that Joseph liked Jesus the least of all his sons."

Father Banks had not found much time to devote to religious culture, but early Sunday-school education enabled him to express prompt astonishment at Heloise's ignorance of the fatherhood of Christ.

"How is it," he asked, "that a young woman of your training has missed instruction in what might be called essential truths? I have heard it said that the rising generation is frightfully and lamentably ignorant of the Bible, and becoming more so every day, but —"

He hesitated and Heloise finished the sentence for him, much to the amusement of Alfred.

"You had no idea anyone could be so ignorant as myself?"

"I beg your pardon if I have spoken too freely."

"You have not. I like frank speech. However, I am not quite so ignorant in some respects as I seem. But I have dared to do a little thinking; though being a woman I suppose I shouldn't."

Again Alfred laughed, while the old man looked puzzled. The trio were slowly wending their way towards the house, near which a delicious repast was waiting for them, in a rose-embowered summer house.

"What have you dared to think?" asked Alfred, seeing that his father was afraid to pursue the conversation further.

Heloise did not at once reply. She feared she might hurt the feelings of the old gentleman, but as the silence was becoming awkward, she stumbled rather than said:

"Well — let — me — say — something unconventional!—as we are speaking frankly this afternoon. My observation has led me to believe that men are not eager to assume parental relations to children born out of wedlock, even when they have good reason to know that these children are bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. And as to any of them meekly playing

the part attributed to Joseph — I shall have to witness this altruistic feat to accept it."

"You are right as regards the average man," said Alfred boldly, as he stepped aside to let Heloise precede him into the summer house. "Perhaps," he added, "it is easier to believe that the story of Christ's immaculate conception was the invention of some dreamy and half-starved priest."

"The more modern amendments very likely were," assented Heloise. "But the essential story of the virgin mother and the miraculous child has figured in ancient pagan religions, from prehistoric times. It seems to have been the most primitive of ideal religious concepts — a reaching out to something above the natural — the correlation of God and man, even through the flesh. The divine mother and child were worshiped many ages before the evolution of the modern Madonna. The dependence of man's salvation upon belief in the miracle was the only really new thing in the Christian version of the story."

When they all were within, and Heloise had been decked with roses off the vine, Alfred seated her at one side of the table, and his father opposite her, while he himself took the end seat, facing the open arch where John, the Chinaman, passed in and out, in his capacity of waiter.

"I put my father opposite to you because he is a little deaf," Alfred remarked.

"I had not noticed it," said Heloise, speaking a little louder than was her custom.

"I am not very deaf and if I can see a person's lips move I have little trouble in making out what is said, no matter how low or indistinct the speech. I am sorry, though, to rob Alfred of the pleasure of sitting opposite you, for now that you have your hat off, you are very beautiful. You should never cover your forehead!"

"Oh, it is these beautiful pink roses that have made the change. How lovely they are! How happy God must have been when Nature first produced something like a rose."

"And how happy man must have felt when he first improved on them!" added Alfred.

This speech caused not a little merriment while John was helping the trio in the most bountiful manner to fried spring chicken, and new potatoes and peas, deliciously cooked and temptingly served.

"By the way," Alfred continued, "we must show Miss Mills our primitive rose-bush. We keep one on hand for several reasons; there are some roses on it now. It bears a very simple sort of flower containing merely one straggling row of pink leaves. Just think for a moment what we gardeners, from Adam to Alfred, have done in this art since man was turned loose in a

wilderness of thorns and brambles. I'll venture to say the rose was in that early time almost all thorn. Now it is nearly all rose."

"I do not remember to have ever seen such perfectly gorgeous specimens of the rose family as I have since my arrival in California. And your fruit is not less wonderful than your flowers," smiled Heloise, glancing at a side-table covered with various kinds of fruit, all perfect of their kind. "I had thought of playing at gardening myself, but now that I see what miracles you perform out here, and how hard it is for you to hold on to your gardens, notwithstanding your miraculous labor, I begin to feel discouraged. Mrs. Hall's new nurse tells me that the majority of the people who have done the real drudgery, and who have spent, in many instances, small fortunes, have either lost their places or have them so deeply mortgaged that they are mere serfs of the money-lenders."

"Probably they were poor financiers," said old Mr. Banks, and Alfred, looking very wise, quickly added:

"You can depend upon it, Miss Mills, there was a screw loose somewhere. I am sure you can easily work the kind of miracles we are performing, with a little teaching. Nature treats everyone alike, and is most generous to those who approach her in the right spirit. You have only to take the trouble to learn her

ways and to humor her — as you would a woman."

"Ah! those people of old India who approached Mother Earth as the greatest of divinities were wise in their generation," replied Heloise. "I know that Nature is no respecter of persons, and I am sorry that man does not imitate her. He is a too great respecter of persons, and, to judge by what we see going on about us, he believes that the world was made for the benefit of the few and the serfdom of the many; and as if that were not enough, our religious teachers assure us that even in the next world many are called but few are chosen."

Heloise was speaking quite seriously and was astonished to hear Alfred laugh heartily, as if what she had been saying was a huge joke. She smiled in return, but looked at him with question marks in her eyes. Father Banks had likewise failed to see anything funny in Heloise's remarks, and gave his son a look of surprise, so Alfred grew serious as he replied:

"Of course I don't pretend to know what proportion of the human family God is going to reserve for himself and what portion he will hand over to the devil, and I doubt if God has taken *any* human being into His confidence in this matter, but for the serfdom of the majority in this world, I don't care a cent! The people are such fools. Get them out of one kind of

slavery and they tumble into another. To be sure, these different sorts of slavery all spring from one system, that of monopoly. But so long as the people themselves are satisfied with their old masters under a new name, what can be done about it?"

"They are *not* satisfied," said Heloise with firmness. "I have yet to find anyone who enjoys losing the liberty he has once possessed. Take the case of the Boers! Monopoly has deprived them of their country, their homes, and of the freedom they had evolved for themselves. The remnant has been permitted to return, but henceforth they are evidently to play the part of agricultural serfs to a country which has never shown mercy to her agricultural class.

"Our own people have fought no less stubbornly for liberty than the Boers, though not against such heavy odds. In our first struggle with Great Britain we had the help of France, and with it much more potent aid from the hordes of dissatisfied British subjects who had previously flocked to our shores. Still, notwithstanding the desperate struggles of our forefathers and of our fathers in behalf of freedom, and the oceans of blood shed, how is it with us to-day? Are we in reality a free people? Is our Government a government of the people and for the people?"

"I think the less we say about our Govern-

ment the better. It is too indigestible a subject to discuss at meal-time. Have some more chicken!" frivolously responded Alfred.

Old Mr. Banks, fearing that Alfred had not spoken with proper respect of the Government, or to Heloise, now interposed.

"I read something the other day that struck me as being quite true."

"Not in a newspaper!" cried Alfred, pretending to be so astounded that his father was obliged to join Heloise in a hearty laugh before he could go on.

"No, in a magazine."

"Heaven protect that magazine, and God save its editor!"

"Amen!" promptly put in Heloise, still laughing.

"If you will just keep quiet a few moments I will tell you what it said." Mr. Banks was struggling to recall what he had read which struck him as being altogether true, but Alfred's supper was making him feel so good that he could not at once suppress his gaiety, and Heloise found it extremely difficult to maintain a discreet manner.

"Well — I forget the words — but it spoke of the monopolist as 'that sinister angel who stands stationed at every gate of Paradise, warning us away.'"

"Father, you're a brick — to have stumbled

across a bit of truth anywhere during these lying times. We are without doubt slowly stewing in our own juice with the monopolist as *chef*. But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof! In the meantime, let us eat, drink, and be merry! John, bring some tea!"

"At every gate! Why, what progress we are making," remarked Heloise. "When Adam was driven from his garden only one flaming sword was placed at the east of the garden, together with some cherubims to guard the way of the tree of life. But now *every* gate is guarded by some self-appointed angel, to warn us away altogether."

"That only goes to show how smart the people have become. Being barred out at the east gate, they tried to make entrance at the north gate, when of course some sinister angel took possession and put up another flaming sword. Then the people made a rush for the south gate, only to meet with a similar experience, and finally the west and last gate has been threatened, and a sinister angel has made his way there and mounted guard with his soldiers. But if it is the western people who are leading the onslaught at the west gate, don't borrow any trouble for the future of mankind, for they will not only force the angel to give up his job, but having effected their own entrance

to the tree of life, will respect the rights of others to the same!" cried Alfred.

Old Mr. Banks had listened with the utmost surprise to his son's remarks, and struck in with:

"You perceive, Miss Mills, that my son is very sanguine — in fact, he is so sanguine that all will come out right that he rarely takes the trouble to vote."

Alfred colored furiously, and lost no time in attempting to defend his lack of action as a citizen.

"To be frank, Miss Mills, I have not the time to study properly the great questions of the day, and what is the use of voting when you are not sure what to vote for, or in whom to place your confidence?"

"In my day we voted as our favorite newspaper told us," said Father Banks.

"But nowadays," hotly asserted the young man, "we have no means of getting news except through capitalistic sources. When one suspects the purity of the source, why drink from the fountain? What the people need to do first is to establish a free, non-partisan press of their own, which will really represent them, to establish their own news agencies, and to control the necessary means of communication throughout the world. That is what they will do when they become alive to their power.

Judas betrayed one innocent man to death. It is possible to-day by the aid of the press to betray whole populations to destruction. This could never be accomplished if truth were not so perverted and poisoned, when a war is being worked up, for instance, as to make people mad with desire to kill each other. It is the truth which makes us free. Free schools for the young cannot alone secure and maintain the freedom of a people. The press should tell the truth. But enough —! John, bring some tea! I promised this young lady she should have some of the real article brewed in the real way by a real Chinaman."

John grinned almost from ear to ear, then noiselessly departed. He returned very quickly, bearing a tray with cups and saucers which were works of art from his own flowery kingdom, together with some whipped cream and sugar. The teapot he brought later.

Heloise thought she had never had such a delightful meal in her life, and said so in such a sincere, frank manner that the two men were highly elated with themselves as housekeepers. It was easy to see that they took more pride in playing the feminine role of entertainers than in showing the garden.

Wishing to somewhat restore their balance, Heloise said to the Chinaman, when he reappeared:

"John, you are a jewel! I can't imagine what these poor gentlemen would do without you."

John grinned again in his broadest manner, and he nerved himself to take advantage of his prestige by saying with some difficulty:

"Me likee Melican man — *muchee!*" then ran towards the kitchen with swift steps.

Heloise looked after the flying figure with interest. She wondered to herself why he did not tuck his shirt into his trousers like "Melican man," but aloud she said:

"I hope the American men will like John well enough to treat him decently; though I am afraid it is too much to expect that any white-skinned people will treat a dark-skinned one fairly — do by them as they would be done by."

"Someone has said — perhaps it was Bryan — that 'Anglo-Saxon civilization has taught the individual to protect his own rights; American civilization will teach him to respect the rights of others.' And now shall we look at the garden — if you have quite finished your tea?" urged Alfred, rising.

CHAPTER XVI
A NEW ENGLAND BOULDER



"THERE are abundant evidences of woman capture *de facto* among peoples of the Aryan stock. It existed among the ancient Germans and, according to Olaus Magnus, the Scandinavian nations were continuously at war with one another. . . . The capture of women for wives is very prominent with savage and barbarous peoples of the Semitic race. 'At the time of Mohammed,' says Robertson Smith, 'the practice was universal' among the Arabs.

"But nothing can exceed the brutal ferocity with which sometimes the people of Israel supplied themselves with wives. On one occasion the tribe of Benjamin, or rather the remnant of it which had escaped the sword of Israel, stood in sore need of wives; but their brethren had sworn not to give them their daughters in marriage, nor could they legally marry Gentile women. The difficulty was solved by the wholesale slaughter of Jabez-Gilead, whose population yielded 400 virgins." — *George Elliot Howard.*

XVI

A New England Boulder



WHEN Heloise had reveled in the beauties of the garden until it was too dark to see anything more, she gave her hand first to Father Banks and then to Alfred, in sign of departure. Alfred did not quickly part with it, and he said:

"You intend to go home alone? — Not by a good deal! I don't often get an opportunity to have a moonlight walk with a beautiful young woman, and, by George! I shan't fail to improve this one. See! the moon is just rising magnificently. Father, I will see that Miss Mills is properly escorted. Don't sit up for me, but go to bed at your usual hour."

He released the hand of Heloise to give that of his father a nice little shake, and touched his hat as he left him.

As they passed through the gate, he remarked to Heloise:

"The truth is that men turn into women as they grow old and have to be treated as such. I show my father all the little attentions I expect to show my wife — when I am so fortunate as to have one. We are like lovers, Dad and I."

Heloise's heart warmed to him at once. It

always pleased her to see a son treat his father with respect, but to see one add to respect graceful attentions and lover-like thoughtfulness caused her no little emotion. She did not betray her feelings however, either in speech or in manner, but said in her usual serene tones:

"I have been assured that when a man assumes the part of Benedict he drops that of lover."

"I don't believe it. At any rate I shall not — I dare you to put me to the test! Heloise, I am desperately in love with you!"

Alfred was certainly in earnest. He stopped short, and made Heloise stop also; then took possession of her two arms in such a manner that she felt obliged to look into his glowing dark eyes to see what he was likely to do next.

"When you are tired of forcibly holding me we will walk on and talk the matter over," she said at last, in a mild tone, though inwardly somewhat disturbed.

"You are the strangest woman I have ever met," continued Alfred, "I don't believe you were ever rattled in your life — or in love!" He snapped out the last words savagely, as he gave up the physical coercion part of his love-making. Presently he burst out again:

"Oh, if only the good old days of woman-capture were here! How quickly I would make

sure of you — even if I had to knock you down first."

He stopped still once more and again took possession of her. She felt his grasp of iron on her wrists and knew it was useless to resist. Besides, Heloise was not easily frightened. She simply gazed fearlessly yet sympathetically into his fierce eyes.

"Can you love?" he gasped.

"Yes, the truth is I am deeply in love with an Eastern man this very minute. Otherwise I might easily learn to love you."

"Thanks, but — throw him over! Take a man with a future! Men of the East are mere money-getters. They have no time to cultivate the things which make life worth living. Here men still have good red blood in their veins, and big bodies to carry big hearts in."

Heloise smiled. "Everything grows big on the Western coast — even self-esteem," she added sententiously.

He had loosed his grip and she moved away a little, though still facing him with fearless front.

"Deny what I say if you can!" he insisted. "We are the people of the future."

"I won't attempt to dispute you — but you have yet to prove your claim."

"Bah!" he ejaculated, "what are the Eastern men doing now? They are lying flat in the

dust, worshiping the golden calf which they have set up as their idol."

"Let us try to think that they are recuperating for a new spring. Remember, Nazareth was a place of such poor repute that people would not believe it could bring forth anything good, yet it produced a great Reformer. It is a fact, I believe, that the eastern side of every continent has done more for religion than the western. Our own country is no exception. The East has already brought forth not only some world-approved thinkers, but it has also produced two fairly new religions, those of Joseph Smith and Mrs. Mary Eddy. Both, of course, are built mainly on the Bible, but the religions of both Jew and Christian were largely taken from older sources — for all religion is evolution. Let us hope our East will evolve for us a third religion; one not based on an imaginary fall and an imaginary curse, but on the well-proven Rise of Man, brought to pass from age to age through the infinite and tireless love of God!"

"And you think this Eastern man of yours is going to give the world this new religion? What are his views in regard to marriage? Usually, very religious men consider celibacy as holy and wedlock as an unworthy thing. Since you have put the continent between you, I suppose he does not believe in it, at least for himself.

Why don't you become a nun? Why do you go about the world tempting men to fall in love with you?" Alfred spoke with a rising bitterness of accent.

Aside from this jarring man and woman, the scene was very beautiful and peaceful. The full-orbed moon was rising slowly and gorgeously. The neighborhood, with its groups of tall trees and shrubs, its sweet flowers and velvet lawns, seemed to have sunk into a gentle, dreamless slumber. Not a leaf stirred, not a sound broke the perfect stillness. Even the tread of their feet was muffled by the grass which grew by the wayside. They seemed out of place. Heloise felt the contrast and yearned for the spiritual repose of the nature about them.

She felt that something must be done to divert the angry young man by her side. After a moment's silence she said banteringly:

"But it is out of fashion to fall in love with young, unmarried women. In the few novels which I have taken the time to read lately, the heroes usually fell in love with other men's wives. How comes it that you are behind the times in this respect? — you who are in the front rank of gentlemen-farmers?"

"The men you happen to read about were unfortunate — and so am I!" answered Alfred, despondently.

"In some instances it seemed to me that these heroes were the victims of an unreasonable infatuation, rather than inspired by a sane, healthy love."

"I suppose that means that *I* am a victim of an unreasonable infatuation?"

Alfred emitted a sound intended for satirical laughter, but it fell on Heloise's ear more like a hiss.

"Yes, you are."

"Then I suppose you are the victimizer?"

"True, I am the victimizer — and at the same time as much a victim as yourself."

"Explain! I am not such an adept in matters of love as you seem to be."

"Well, I have noticed that some women and some men are the possessors of an unfortunate sort of magnetism that, not understood or misunderstood, is apt to lead to dangerous consequences. Now, you think you are in love with me —"

"Oh, Heloise, how can you doubt! Good God, I —"

"Be patient while I explain myself." Heloise spoke so firmly that Alfred was obliged to desist.

"Now, suppose that I, who have a great admiration for you and felt my heart warm immensely toward you when I saw how tenderly you treated your father, should accede to your

wishes and marry you. In five years you would find life with me monotonous, and in ten you would be in love with another man's wife, perhaps. The truth is, you are merely infatuated with me."

"You do not know what you are saying! Oh, Heloise, I dare you put me to the test! This religious lover of yours does not care for you as I do, else he would part from the belief which separates him from the woman he ought to adore, rather than part from the woman herself." Alfred put his arms around Heloise and drew her tightly to him.

She waited, as calmly and as stiffly silent as if she had been a carved effigy of herself, until he released her, and then said with the utmost earnestness:

"Yes, he cares for me and he will care for me always."

"How do you *know?* Why is it that you trust in the continuity of *his* love and attribute temporary infatuation to mine?"

"In real love there is a feeling of security which calms the soul and makes earth seem a part of Heaven. Time plays no part in true love. Whether the lovers are together or apart, their affection, resting as it does on an eternity, is ever the same, and they are happy, knowing that each is doing his part, wherever he may be, and that in God's own good time they will be

together. In infatuation this is not the case, for the feeling of insecurity, which is a part of such love, makes for temporary madness, which sometimes becomes more than temporary."

"Then you think I am temporarily mad and may become permanently so. Ah, Heloise, have pity! Be merciful in your judgment of me. Try me — since that Eastern lover of yours is too holy to enter the marriage state on his own account. In heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

"How do you know?"

"The Bible says so."

"How came the Biblical writers to know more about what goes on in heaven than you or I?"

"The Word of God says so and Christ himself said so."

"Yes, he is reported as having said 'For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven.' In the time of Christ marriage was still a very materialistic affair, and I believe there was some doubt as to whether women had souls or not. Christ did not refuse the homage and the material help which a group of women lavished upon him, but he seemed to regard marriage as a union on a merely material plane. Matthew says he spoke of a couple who were wedded as being no more twain but one *flesh*.

Since the time of Christ the evolution of civilization has been swifter, and in consequence there have been many marriages of *minds*. Even spiritual marriages are occasionally made now and are destined to become more frequent. But, Alfred, we are home, and I must bid you good-night, for there is much for me to do before I leave."

"Oh, Heloise! will you let me go without a word? a glance of hope? Have you no compassion?"

Alfred took her hand in both of his and gazed imploringly into her calm eyes.

"My dear friend, in less than five years you will thank me for the attitude I have maintained to-night," she said firmly, but sympathetically.

"It is not true! If I prove to you at the end of that time that I am right, and your Eastern lover is still too holy to wed, and likely to remain so, will you be mine? The best of us are liable to make mistakes. Give me one word of hope!"

Heloise shook her head.

"You are enough to drive a man mad," said Alfred, flinging her hand away.

"Let us not part in anger, Alfred, my dear friend. Do you know how I shall always recall you and what happiness the memory will give me?"

Alfred gave a sharp cry. "I don't want your

memories, I don't want your friendship! I want your love—*you*—yourself!"

"I shall always see you as you looked when you pressed your old father's hand in parting from him to-night," she continued gently.

Again did Alfred sieze her hand, but this time without anger, and, having kissed it tenderly, he gave her one sad, wistful look, then turned and went down the lane. Many tears fell by the wayside and many more fell on his pillow that night. The man was deeply smitten. In him had smouldered a certain sort of passion which something in Heloise's personality had caused to burst into flame. Without giving the situation the serious thought of a more mature man, he had nerved himself to approach her with the air of a conquering hero; he had tried to carry her by storm, but he found that all the forces he could summon made no more impression upon her anchored soul than do the ocean waves that beat upon a New England boulder.

CHAPTER XVII
A PILLAR OF THE CHURCH



"Go, stalk the Red Deer o'er the heather,
Ride, follow the Fox if you can!
But for pleasure and profit together,
Allow me the hunting of Man —
The chase of the Human, the search of the Soul
To its ruin — the hunting of Man."

The Old Shikarri.

XVII

A Pillar of the Church

ABEL gradually gained strength enough to leave his chamber, and although many of his people, when they saw his pale, emaciated face, and observed his feeble gait, declared that his work on earth was done, he surprised them one Sunday by again taking his place in his pulpit. During his illness and long confinement he had received, he felt sure, some new glimpses of the truth, and he wished to bear witness to them before he left for his vacation. This duty he felt the more keenly incumbent upon him because of the supine attitude he had been in mentally since the great change had begun to work within his soul. He recalled his position at the death bed of Mr. Mills, where pity for the creed-bound soul departing hence had kept him silent. His mind reverted often to the day that Mrs. Symonds called him to her and made him the confidant of her unspeakable agony of soul. He recalled with a sort of spiritual shame his helplessness on that occasion; when the fear of seeming to be faithless to the creed he had always professed had struggled with the larger light within him, and held him silent while the

brave mother-soul of the woman had broken the bounds of custom and cant and had laid hold on such straws of spiritual aid as chance had wafted her way.

To be sure, in the time which remained to him Abel could do little more than give his deacons a shock or two and set his congregation to thinking. But, come what might, he would improve the time that was left and use it with courage and fidelity.

He took for his text the first Sunday after his return to his pulpit the tenth and eleventh verses of the twenty-second chapter of Revelations:

"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

From these verses Abel preached on the fallibility of mankind. In addition, he related to his congregation curious little experiences he had had during his last illness; how it seemed to him that he was caught up, like the Apostle Paul, into Paradise. There being no prohibition in his case as to relating what he saw and heard in this retreat for human spirits, he proceeded with a wealth of poetical language and

exquisite imagery to give his congregation as complete a picture as possible of what this particular Paradise he had seen was like and of the employment of the beings he found there. He repeated some amusing conversations he had held with various shining ones in connection with the creed which he had taken for granted was as familiar to them as to himself. It appeared from the responses they made that they were totally ignorant of this wonderful human production, and regarded it as the work of children learning their "A B C's" in comparison with the stupendous facts of Nature and of Nature's God.

Naturally, the people marveled at this sermon of their pastor, and the more they conned the sayings of one hitherto so orthodox the more their astonishment grew; while the good deacons not only marveled, but were enraged at the idea that their own minister should lay claim to having had an experience similar in some respects to that of the Apostle Paul. It was outrageous, scandalous! but they would, nevertheless, give him sufficient rope to hang himself. They would let him preach the following Sunday, as he had announced he would do. *After that*, if he continued his erratic course — well, he ought to be tarred and feathered and ridden out of the country on a rail. Orthodoxy

would see to it that wherever he went church doors would be slammed in his face.

When Abel's mind was once made up to do a thing he went about it thoroughly. He intended to show his people once and for all that he no longer held to the infallibility of the Biblical writers, any more than he held to that of the Pope. He had already dealt several sturdy blows in his last sermon; it now remained for him to cap the climax by choosing his text from an American writer whom he believed to be quite as earnest, and much more sane (and not a little wiser), than most of the Jewish writers whose sayings were embalmed in the pages of the Old and the New Testament.

The author so distinguished was Emerson, and the text he chose from this newest testament of the times was as follows:

"God screens us evermore from premature ideas. Our eyes are holden so that we cannot see things that stare us in the face until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened — then we behold them, and the time when we saw them not is like a dream."

The fact that the sermon was a beautiful and instructive one only added fuel to the flames. Indeed, the men in authority were so beside themselves with anger that they not only insisted on Abel's immediate resignation, but declared that he should not have a cent of the

money that the women had raised in order that he might have his much-needed vacation.

The women, however, having obtained the money only by hard, exhausting toil — which had laid some of them on sick beds for days — thought that they ought to have a word to say about the disposition of these funds. They hold a meeting and prepared some resolutions to this effect. Unfortunately, the money had been already paid into the hands of the treasurer of the church, and was therefore subject to the control of a certain group of men who were ultra-orthodox. These men insisted that they had all had a hand in raising the money, and that furthermore it had been collected for the restoration to health of a minister pledged to the propagation of the orthodox faith in its purity. Rev. Abel was now showing himself to be a mouthpiece of the devil, and it would be scandalous to assist him in his diabolical work. As for the women who had drafted the resolution claiming authority in the church, and who desired to use that authority as Eve had used hers, to degrade man and subject him to the wiles of the Evil One, they would turn a deaf ear to their petitions and resolutions.

The women appointed Mrs. Symonds, upon whom had fallen the brunt of the labor in connection with the raising of a thousand dollars of the amount, and her new daughter, who had

given five hundred dollars out of her own pocket, to call upon the leading deacon and give him a piece of their minds.

They called at his place of business and found him at leisure, for he was not much of a business man. Indeed, his chief occupation was that of a "pillar of the church," and he had the reputation of being an expert who could scent heterodoxy when it was afar off.

Deacon Bray was of the opinion that one can poison one's mind as easily and as disastrously as one can poison one's body. Nothing could have induced him to read a book tainted with heterodoxy. The fear of receiving poison into his moral system was so great that he read little more than the Bible and the books upon which orthodoxy had set its stamp. As for works of science, so-called, he eschewed them utterly; likewise the daily papers with their big Sunday editions.

Having seated Mrs. Symonds and her daughter and passed the compliments of the day with them, the deacon resumed his chair near his desk, on which was a pamphlet containing the Sunday-school lesson for the approaching Sabbath, spread open near his pocket Bible and a big concordance. Women "strictly orthodox" the deacon was fond of, but those tainted or even scented with heretodoxy he had no use for,

regarding them as "dangerous," if not "of the devil."

For some little time he had been viewing Mrs. Symonds as a "dangerous" woman. He accordingly gave her a severe look as she began to explain the object of her call. When she had finished he said tersely:

"Sister, let us pray over this matter, that we may see the truth as it is in Jesus Christ."

The trio were seated in the second and back room of the deacon's suite, which was quite free from intrusion. It was a room where he frequently prayed with sinners and held all kinds of consultation on matters pertaining to religion.

Both ladies were dressed in deep mourning, and looked very sad. Inez would have acceded to the deacon's desire, from the constant habit she had formed of being deferential and polite to her elders, but Mrs. Symonds laid a restraining hand on her arm as she said in a dignified manner:

"We are not here to-day to learn the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. We are here to seek justice. We have labored day and night for some weeks past to raise money in order that our minister, who is nearly dead in our service, should have the means to secure recuperation placed at his command. We have succeeded in raising fifteen hundred dollars, as I stated a moment ago. Will you not use your influence

to get this money paid promptly into the hands of our dear pastor? That is the question I should like an answer to, here and now."

The deacon fidgeted in his chair. He was ill at ease. He liked best to settle things by prayer, since not only himself but a good many others considered that he was gifted in that respect. In speech he was apt either to be slow and hesitating or to get excited and call names — which practice might be Biblical but did not tend to convince an opponent. He began in his usual clumsy, hesitating manner:

"Mrs. Symonds — it is — always — hard to reason with — a woman. She will listen to many things of evil report — with a credulous ear — but she has not a mind — capable — of distinguishing between right or wrong — or things reasonable — or unreasonable. Now in respect to this money — we have all helped to raise it — to propagate the truth as it is in Jesus Christ —"

"May I ask how *you* helped to raise it — you and the rest of the men?"

"We have attended your entertainments — and patronized your dinners. Otherwise your receipts would have been small."

"And you got your money's worth, did you not? When have you had such a bountiful supply of food for so little money as at our dinners?"

"That is not the point — as to whether we got our money's worth. The point is — what was that money raised for? — The re-establishment of the health of a preacher in order that he might continue his — ministrations — in an orthodox church —"

"It was raised," rather rudely interrupted Mrs. Symonds, "to give a much-needed vacation to the Reverend Abel Allen —"

"Who has turned out to be a wolf masquerading as a sheep until he saw fit to throw off his disguise!" The deacon was beginning to get excited, and dropped his hesitating manner of speech.

"So our dear, gentle pastor is a wolf! Pray when did you arrive at this conclusion? Has he been showing you his teeth, or snarling at you, or trying to devour you? Come, give us your reasons for believing this to be the case, you who claim a monopoly of the reasoning faculty."

"I say he is a wolf, a thief, a robber! He steals into the orthodox fold, pretending to be one of the elect, and when he has stolen the hearts of the people so that he thinks he can do what he likes with them, he begins to play the part of serpent, though to some he still appears as an angel of light. You seem to be among the members who would follow him to hell."

The deacon darted a look of what he himself

would have called "righteous anger" full into the astonished countenance of the unreasoning Mrs. Symonds. Her daughter took no part in the excited conversation and merely looked amused.

"Well, I would greatly prefer taking my chances with him than with you, and your vindictive Jehovah and your stupid Heaven, both a conception of the unenlightened human brain."

"It is nothing new for women to prefer the company of the serpent to that of the righteous Jehovah," said the deacon sarcastically. Then he added in a pompous manner, "But I may as well give you to understand that we shall lose no time in bringing matters to a crisis. The man must go and go quickly. The quicker the better for the safety of the flock."

"But you will surely not cast him adrift without a cent in his pocket, and of course the furniture in the three rooms and the things in the museum are his."

"When Adam changed his religion and chose to believe Satan instead of God, he was driven into the wilderness without being permitted to take anything away with him."

"Not even his fig-leaf apron?"

"They both doubtless wore away the evidences of their guilt. We shall not take away the Rev. Allen's garments, clerical or otherwise,

though if he had his just deserts he would be deprived of them and drummed out of town.

"Or hung on a cross, I suppose, if the times were as brutal as those of Christ. I would like to call your attention to the fact that of the fifteen hundred dollars raised, five hundred were subscribed and subsequently paid into the church treasury by my daughter here. She is not orthodox, and she did not give it to propagate that belief. She gave it for the benefit of a good and gentle Christian whose health had been wrecked in the ministry. Surely you will not refuse to turn that sum over to the person to whom it was given, and to whom it rightfully belongs?"

The deacon rose and began to readjust his ink bottle and pens and made a feint as if he wished to attend to some pressing business matter. When he had pulled out a couple of ominous-looking documents from one of the drawers of his desk, he replied stiffly:

"That course would be impossible. If we returned one person's money there would be others wanting the same thing. We are determined to keep everything in connection with this crisis in our church as close as possible. It is the duty of the women to stay at home and keep their mouths shut. As for the men, those in authority, they will do what is for the best interest of the church and of orthodoxy."

"Does the minister know he is not to have this money that the sisters have raised for him?"

"He knows what it is right he should know," said the deacon in a dignified manner.

"I take it that he has resigned," remarked Mrs. Symonds, rising. Her daughter also rose.

"Yes, he has resigned and his resignation has been accepted."

"So quickly?"

"We have given him plenty of rope with which to hang himself. So far as orthodoxy is concerned he is henceforth as dead as a nail. He has probably exhibited the *new light* he claims to have received for the first and last time. He is quite ill."

"And penniless, I suppose."

"Worse! In debt." The deacon chuckled.

"Ah, Inez, let us go and see how it is with this gentle follower of the lowly Christ. I wish you good-morning, Deacon Bray."

"Good-morning," repeated the deacon, stiffly, resuming his seat and leaving the ladies to find their way through his rooms unattended.

CHAPTER XVIII
A CURE FOR THE BLUES



"He who always speaks the truth will find himself in sufficiently dramatic situations." — *Lacon.*

XVIII

A Cure for the Blues

WHEN Abel made up his mind to preach what he considered to be new truth, he foresaw what the step would cost him. He realized that he would see hatred in many countenances where formerly there had been love, and that he would be subjected to many humiliations. He did not foresee, however, the vindictiveness with which certain of his deacons would stab him not only in his heart but in his back as well.

Perhaps it was just as well that the excitement, in his weak condition, brought on a relapse of his illness, and that physical prostration supervened for three days and two nights, as it gave him a respite from the deadlier kind produced by mental tension. The third day of his illness was drawing to a close when Mrs. Symonds and Inez called. Although many of his people who stood by him had come to the house to see him, no one had been admitted since the new doctor had taken possession of him, together with a nurse whom he had brought there immediately after his first call.

The doctor was a scientific man, who did not care whether mankind had fallen with Adam or

whether it had begun a new era of expansion when Cain went forth with branded forehead. Some parts of the Bible he thought very good and some very vile. He was sure of one thing, and that was that the ancients knew little of the human body, and that their treatment of the sick was childish, when it was not brutal. He liked Abel as a man, but even if he had not he would have done all in his power to bring him relief from pain and restore him to health at the earliest possible time. In short, he was an excellent specimen of the up-to-date scientific medical practitioner.

The nurse was doubtful when Mrs. Symonds insisted that it was most important that she and her daughter be allowed to see Abel, but she returned with the message that they would be very welcome.

Mrs. Symonds was the first to take the minister's out-stretched hands and offer her sympathy, and her daughter followed. After the greetings were exchanged the older woman approached Abel and said:

"Bear with me a moment while I talk a little business — just a little. My daughter and I are eager to coöperate with the members of your congregation in making you well; all have given something, even though the poorest have had to contribute their share in loving words. Material help is necessary in this

world where the spirit is wedded to the flesh, so please allow us to add this to what they have given."

As Mrs. Symonds finished speaking, she handed the minister a cheque for fifteen hundred dollars. The minister held the folded slip in his thin fingers for a moment, then opened it and glanced at it. As he did so, a slight flush passed over his pallid countenance.

"Dear sister, I have already refused this money. I *pray* you not to ask me to accept it. It appears the matter is causing friction among the people, and I would rather not have anything to do with money which is not freely given."

"Please read the signature at the bottom of the cheque, and you will see that it comes from a different source than from what you think."

Abel tried to read the name but found it impossible to make it out.

Inez laughed and said, "I am a poor scribe, but present the cheque at the proper place and you will find that it is cash-trustworthy."

"Then this has nothing to do with the fifteen hundred dollars raised lately by the women of the church?"

"Nothing!" exclaimed both women at once.

Mrs. Symonds added, "It is the West in the person of my daughter which gives you this sum in return for benefits received. She thinks that

your sermons have done her unspeakable good. She begs you to accept it as a contribution toward your vacation expenses. She will be offended if you refuse it."

Seeing Abel's hesitation, the ladies had become a little importunate.

"So it is California that is furnishing me this goodly sum? Well, I accept it gladly, and I shall lose no time in hastening thither to see with my own eyes what that famed country — Los Angeles — is like. A thousand thanks for your generous present!" said Abel enthusiastically to Inez, but with the image of Heloise, only Heloise — whom he was now so soon to see! — before him.

Abel held out his hand, and Inez, blushing brightly with pleasure, put her daintily gloved palm in his. He pressed it warmly, for her much-needed and generous gift had touched him deeply. He added quickly, however:

"You have given me this money for a specific purpose, but I hope you will not be displeased if I help some of my poor and adjust a few matters which require attention before I leave the city."

"Certainly not! Only don't give it all away, but use some to get well on," said the happy Inez.

"As my vacation bids fair to be an extended one, I shall be most economical, I can assure you."

"One word more before we go." It was Mrs. Symonds who spoke, advancing as she did so quite close to Abel's bed-side; Inez retreating meanwhile.

"Yes, one word more," repeated Mrs. Symonds, "while you have strength to listen."

"As many as you like," joyfully replied Abel, placing another pillow under his head before Mrs. Symonds could assist him. "You see I am getting well fast. I shall be up in a day or two. Mrs. Symonds, it is not often that a preacher who dares step off the approved platform, guarded as it is by an Argus-eyed army of deacons, gets off as easily as I have."

"It is a wonder they did not denounce you in some public manner, or insist on a church trial or investigation of some sort," said Mrs. Symonds.

"If I had not promptly sent in my resignation I suppose they would have done so. Deacon Bray would have liked nothing better. As it happened, the only way in which they could punish me was to retain the money raised for my vacation expenses."

"You let them do it without a protest, I suppose."

"Not only so, but I was the first to suggest that it be withheld. It was really raised by an orthodox people for the benefit of an orthodox preacher."

"You forget," protested Mrs. Symonds, "that it was the women who raised the money, and that they raised it for your personal benefit — just as Mary broke the box of precious ointment for the benefit of the Master. I doubt if women care for the orthodox machinery of the church. All the women of our church — so far as I can ascertain — want you to have the money."

"So they still stand by me!" exclaimed Abel with visible emotion. "You must tell them how grateful I am. They have been my chief support. I can never forget their goodness, and the thought that my new belief parts me from such a large group of sympathetic friends gives me great pain."

Abel was panting for breath as he finished speaking. Mrs. Symonds began to fan him and Inez hurried close to his bedside.

At this moment, the nurse, who suspected that the ladies were taxing the strength of their pastor too much, put in an appearance and regarded them with severe looks.

"I see we must go," said Mrs. Symonds.

"What was the word you wanted with me?" Abel was breathing easier, and smiling affectionately first at Mrs. Symonds and then at her daughter. Then he looked in a pleading way at his nurse, as if to beg for a moment more.

"It is this: We start west in a few days.

You say you are going to California, to Los Angeles, to see what that famed country is like. Why not go with us and let us care for you? The arrangement would please us so much."

"Oh, so much!" urged Inez, raising her beautiful eyes in pleading abandon to those of Abel. Both of the women had found his sympathy very sweet in the terrible days which had followed the suicide of the man they had so deeply loved.

"I see no reason why we should not fly across the continent together," pursued Abel musingly. "Perhaps some incipient novelist in the church will announce that I have eloped with the Californian heiress, and the congregation will marvel at the news and believe."

The ladies laughed and Mrs. Symonds added as they went out of the room: "That would be quite in keeping with a people whose very creed is built on the crudest and coarsest kind of fiction."

Abel winced a little, for the time was short since he himself had been a sturdy upholder of the Bible story.

"Who this wonderful story-teller was nobody has ever known," mused Abel to himself, "but that he was an eminently successful one — as people count success — nobody can gainsay. He was a most conceited one, too, as conceited as he was ignorant. His range of characters,

though small, were important, embracing as they did the supposed Maker of the world, whom he named Jehovah; the supposed diabolical enemy of this Jehovah, whom he called 'The Serpent,' and two persons whom he called the first parents of mankind, and whom he described somewhat as Innocents Abroad.

"Neither," he considered, "can anybody discover whether the relator of this romance meant his story to be taken literally or as a clever bit of fiction. But whatever he intended, the novel has had a stupendous run and the dramatized version still holds the stage, and multitudes of devout people accept the leading personage of this melodrama as one of the Trinity of Gods who rule the universe."

CHAPTER XIX

ON TO THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE



"God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please; you can never have both." — *Emerson.*

"If your mirror be broken, look into still water; but have a care that you do not fall in." — *Hindu Proverb.*

XIX

On to the Land of Heart's Desire



REBIRTH from a contracted sphere of being, or of thinking, to one of larger dimensions is usually a cruel process. Even if it has been swift and apparently Heaven-sent, there follows a period of questioning and depression. It is hard to overcome and toss away the inheritances bequeathed by an old religion.

At least Abel found this to be the case with himself, and as there was no Heloise with him to help him with firm hand and serene countenance, he might have sunk into a condition of apathetic melancholy, and become a "ne'er-do-weel," in so far as the propagation of any new religion was concerned.

In Calvinism of a narrow, despairing sort had his mother conceived him and brought him forth. Abel could not remember when he had not been subject to periods of the deepest, blackest depression. At such times he was sure that he was a castaway. When the three women called, he was not only recovering from a period of physical torture, but from a belated midnight attack of his old enemy. It is true that he had endeavored to cultivate a more cheerful type

of orthodoxy than that of his mother, and had succeeded in lessening the number of these periods of despair and in lightening the hue of those which still tarried. He had, however, waked in the dead hour of the preceding night, after a three days' hard fight with bodily pain, only to find himself in a condition of depression greater than any that had seized him since he had first gotten religion at all.

Cold drops of perspiration stood on his brow. He felt himself to be lost, irrevocably lost, and not only so, but doomed to be a stumbling block in the way of salvation to others. In his wretchedness, he repeated over and over again the despairing words of Christ, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" At length, his wretchedness becoming unendurable in the darkness, he turned up the night-lamp, when his eyes fell upon an unopened letter directed in the flowing handwriting of Heloise. Clutching it as a drowning man does a life-preserver which has been flung to him by a friendly hand, he eagerly broke the seal. It contained but one line, a quotation from Emerson: "*O friend, never strike sail to a fear.*"

Ah, what joy those few words gave him! What renewed confidence in the Author of his being, whose other name is Love!

The message had come just in the nick of time, from the beloved one whose heart beat in

unison with his own. She had foreseen his need with prophetic vision. So, in parting with the old religion he had not parted with all messages from the unseen; it appeared that the new religion had likewise its timely word. Abel was so happy that after a prayer of thanksgiving he fell into a sweet, refreshing sleep, from which he emerged free from pain, either of a physical or mental nature. He decided ere he rose from his bed that he would formulate a new creed — at least for his own use, one replete with the goodness of God, and with the vindictiveness of man left out. It should be full of courage and hope for the unending progress of the race, and not a line in it should "strike sail to a fear."

The trip to California was full of keen and pleasant surprises for the trio of good friends. Every hour the thought that he was nearing his Heloise filled his heart with joy. He was astonished at the bigness of the country, and the richness and variety of its resources. What might not the people of the New World be able to accomplish with such glorious means placed at their disposal? Already it had meant a renaissance of the expanding portion of the race along democratic lines. It would mean in time the economic salvation of the people. Then would flee the land beastly, cantankerous Pov-

erty, the prolific mother of diseases innumerable, of wretchedness unnamable, of devitalizing fear, and of deadly sin. Surely, it is the desire of God that the human spirit should grow unceasingly in its veil of flesh, and has He not amply furnished here the means for the proper growth of every soul? It only remains for the people to exercise proper control of these means.

Abel had passed but two days in the elegant home of Inez Johnson, in Los Angeles, when he insisted that he must be setting out on his travels. He therefore bade the ladies adieu, promising to let them hear from him very soon, and made his way at once to Pasadena, where he hoped to find Heloise, as he had obtained her mail address from Mrs. Brookes, the boarding-house keeper, before he left Boston. After a little difficulty in following directions he arrived at Mrs. Hall's cottage. He left his cab waiting at the gate and hastened to the front entrance. He had no eyes for anything, save only Heloise, but as he passed along the main walk he got a dim impression that the place was a cozy little rural nest, and a fit home for the woman he adored.

In answer to his knock, a young boy opened the door. Abel asked eagerly after a young lady by name Miss Heloise Mills.

The lad responded in a sudden access of excitement not unmixed with sadness:

"Oh, she left this morning for Denver. Grandma is so lonesome without her that she and her new nurse have gone to spend the day with mamma."

Abel felt suddenly faint and ill. He asked for a drink of water and seated himself on the porch. The boy returned quickly and the fresh and sparkling liquid gave Abel new strength.

"Can you give me the new address of Miss Mills?" he asked presently.

"I can give you the address of the man who has charge of her things," observed the lad sympathetically, for he saw that the strange man was greatly disappointed over not finding the young lady.

"What things?" asked Abel absently, wondering what the boy meant.

"Why, didn't you know that Heloise's brother is dead, and left her a lot of money and things?"

"You must have reference to the death of her father, my boy. I never heard her speak of having a brother living."

"No, my grandmother says Heloise didn't know herself she had a brother till she got the news of his death, and found he had left her a lot of money and things. He must have left her a *lot*, sure enough! Why, she made this here place of my grandmother's all over new before she left. It was the rottenest old place you ever saw, when she came to it. You can

see for yourself what it looks like now. I tell you that Heloise Mills is a good one and no mistake! If she is any relation of yours, you ought to be mighty proud of her!"

"No, I can't say she is any relation of mine — but it's no fault of mine that she isn't!" replied Abel with a smile.

The boy readily surmised the true state of affairs.

"Perhaps you found her hard to land; so did the young man who helped her fix the garden. He was dreadfully gone on her. But grandma said she was in love with an Eastern man and would have nothing to say to the Pasadena man. I think she missed it by not throwing the other man over. Why, that Pasadena man has the prettiest place in the country! — not so big as some, but it would make your mouth water to see it!"

"Did Heloise see his home?"

"Yes, the man took her all over it and gave her supper into the bargain. He was dead in love with her from the start."

"And is he a gardener by profession?"

"Yes, a *way-up* one — you bet! Gets fine paying orders. I don't know how he came to help lay out and fix up my grandmother's rotten little place. I guess Heloise was what fixed him. *Anybody* would work for her!"

In spite of all of Abel's self-restraint, some

keen pangs of jealousy darted through his breast in connection with this man. He had all along felt a presentiment that in this sort of a person he should find a rival, for he well knew that Heloise was a passionate lover of Mother Earth, and could easily and rapidly enter into sympathetic relations with a man having the same strong liking for the soil, and the things to be gotten out of it.

He moved uneasily in his chair and finally rose in an absent-minded manner. The boy, who was alert to every movement and look he made, offered to show him how "perfectly lovely the gardener had laid out the back yard." He also insisted on showing his visitor, after he had gotten him behind the house, not only the new garden but the barn, and he grew quite eloquent over the changes that had been effected there in so short a time. Then he drew him to the new hen coop and threw the chickens some grain in order to show Abel how spry the birds were, and how lordly the rooster became under such exciting circumstances. He lamented that his grandma and nurse had the horse and carriage with them, as he would so much like to exhibit them likewise. But in lieu of the horse he ran and got his bicycle and did some tricks, much to Abel's amusement. Finally, having exhausted the wonders outside of the house, he took his visitor over every part of the inside and

ended by declaring that, "Heloise was a dandy — she did things so quick!"

Having appreciated everything, including the lad's pleasure in exhibiting the place, Abel at last reached the porch and tried to say good-by to his little friend, but without success; the boy hung onto him like a burr until he was in his cab. He made Abel promise that if he found Heloise anywhere in the course of his travels, he would urge her to come back "because we are all so lonesome without her."

As Abel was lonesome, too, he took the very next train for Denver, saying to himself that California was doubtless all its most ardent admirers claimed, but that he was quite satisfied with a flying trip through it, for the present.

Notwithstanding that Abel's mind and heart and soul were full of Heloise, and the things he should say to her as soon as they met, he was many times transported with awe and wonder at the glorious views which presented themselves as the cars whirled him rapidly towards his destination. At such times he would sigh deeply and say to himself, "Oh, if only Heloise could enjoy this magnificent scenery with me, how happy I would be! A man without a woman is a very incomplete creature."

But the three days' trip and its scenery were soon things of the past, and the City of the Plains something to be enjoyed in the present,

perhaps with his Heloise by his side. He would not permit himself to dwell on this last prospect; it offered too full a draught of human happiness. If only he could hold her hand in his for a few swift moments, look deep into her lovely eyes and have a half-hour's talk with her, he would, he thought, be satisfied for a long time to come. For in that half-hour, he felt sure he could win her promise to write him at least once every week. In comparison with the single message he had received during a half a dozen weeks that would be bliss indeed! As for being able to secure Heloise's hand in marriage, he felt deep within his soul a premonition that no speedy union was to be effected.

"Religion," mused Abel, "is never likely to prove really successful as a matchmaker until it sets the two sexes side by side and grants them equal liberty and equal marital rights. It is quite true that what is called marriage is entered into by the great majority of human beings, but when one sees the foremost nations of the earth armed to the teeth, and observes that all mankind is in a state of terrible unrest, if not of actual war, and that monopoly is everywhere the rule and that equal rights nowhere prevail, one must perceive there is something wrong at the very foundations of society, and those foundations are *in the home*, on which all society rests."

He might also have added: And when one attends weddings and sees priests vowing one sex into life-long vassalage to the other, it is easy to arrive at the conclusion that while religion is the great match-maker, it is at the same time the great mischief-maker of modern times. For as soon as the husband begins to wield the unnatural power which religion and the State places in his hands, the ideality of the relation departs and the warring element enters — more or less disguised — and is duly transferred to offspring.

Abel sighed. Then suddenly a keen pang of fear shot through his breast. "Ah," he half muttered, "it would be just like Heloise if she has fallen heir to a large sum of money to start in some way a big fight for the equality of her sex with mine, and to refuse to wed until the battle is won — at least in America. In that case, Heaven help me!"

CHAPTER XX
THE LOVERS' MEETING

"We see but half the causes of our deeds,
Seeking them wholly in the outer life,
And heedless of the encircling spirit world,
Which, though unseen, is felt, and sows in us
All germs of pure and world-wide purposes."

Lowell.

"Augustine felt that Christ asked him to sacrifice every pleasure and interest that was purely of this world. A complete sacrifice of female love was the supreme test of readiness to be a disciple."

XX

The Lovers' Meeting



WHEN Heloise left for Denver, Mrs. Hall arranged that, on reaching that city, she should go directly to relatives of hers, residing there, to stay until she could look about. But by the second day after Heloise's advent she had made herself so "solid" with the household, from the mistress down to Nettie, the maid, that they begged her to accept their hospitality longer.

It was there that Abel found her, and tremblingly rang the sacred door-bell, sacred because *she* had touched it.

Thankful indeed was Heloise that Abel was ushered into the parlor while other members of the family were present. With the memory of their last interview vividly in her mind, and with her purpose to eschew marriage not a whit lessened, the presence of others would save her from any possible emotional explosion on his part. And she dreaded herself no less than Abel, should a crisis arise between them.

Meeting as they did, both bore themselves admirably, and only the changeful color in either face could have given the onlookers a

hint of what lay beneath. When they were left alone, she lost no time in begging Abel to give her a full account of all that had happened in the interval.

"To business at once? without a word — a look of love — an embrace?" he asked.

"Take the love for granted, Abel; and tell me without delay about yourself and your church. I fear you have suffered."

And as Abel told her all, without reservation or interruption, she listened with widening eyes and bated breath. When he had finished she exclaimed, "Abelard, how you astonish me!"

She had not believed it possible that Abel could have undergone so sudden and thorough a conversion. It was like that of the Apostle Paul.

Her own change of heart had been a very slow and cautious growth. She received a new idea with reluctance, examined it on every side, walked with it, ate with it, and slept with it; she could scarcely tell when it became a part of her. But here, by her side, was a person who had fairly changed his soul from the effect of a vision in the night, of the duration of which he had not the slightest idea. He could not even tell whether he was in the body or out, and only knew that when he came to himself he realized with joy that he was a new creature in a new and expanded universe.

"A new creature in Christ?" queried she, putting him to the severest test she could imagine.

"In one respect, a new creature out of Christ, I should say," boldly affirmed Abel.

"In what respect?"

"Heloise! How can you ask? Has not one of my very first acts, born of my new religion, been to seek light from a woman? Christ never did that. It never seems to have occurred to him that God not only lighteth every man who cometh into the world but likewise every woman; and that occasionally He gives the strongest and clearest light to one of that sex. But, my love, the religion of Christ was such an advance upon that of the Jews of his time that the Testament which deals with his life and acts may well be called the *New* Testament. Still, while Christ was uniformly kind to women and permitted them to minister to his physical necessities, he never took sweet counsel with them, or accepted them as regular disciples. He never looked upon them as created to be the companions and equals of his own sex in a high sense of the word. He would never have thought it worth his while to consult one," persisted Abel.

"Ah, Abel, *mio*, your advance has been so swift that you fairly take my breath away. I fear that you will convince me that men leap where women crawl."

Abel merely smiled and continued:

"But now let us suppose that Christ had seen the necessity of co-education and equality, had taught man neither to despise nor fear woman, but to boldly and lovingly accept her as his companion, friend, and co-worker in the progress of the world. What beautiful, pious souls might have multiplied in the world in place of the solitary, barren monks and nuns, who leave no inheritors of their devotion to God and things spiritual. How much speedier might have been the advance of the race! There is no doubt in my mind but that by degrading woman religion has inconceivably retarded the progress of mankind."

"You are right, my wise Abelard. And you will help build a new religion on the Rise of Man and the Equality of the Sexes — promise me!"

Abel grasped both of Heloise's hands firmly in his own, and looking deep into her clear, serene eyes said:

"I promise you, my sweet, other self, that so long as the vision of that newly discovered, blessed paradise remains with me, wherein I saw multitudes of beings dwelling together in perfect equality, that I will be true to the newborn faith within me. May I seal my promise with a kiss?" he added lightly, after a little pause.

"With two, if they will make it any more binding," said Heloise, smiling up at him archly.

Abel first kissed her reverentially on the forehead, but after their long separation the contact proved too much for him; his passionate nature, so long held in complete subjection, burst its bounds at last. He grasped her almost fiercely in his arms and held her tightly to his breast, then he kissed her on the lips in that perfect abandonment of bliss which is heedless of consequences. If Heloise's nature had been equally starved and passionate, there would be little more to relate than that these two soon pledged themselves, according to the usual custom, on the one hand to life-long mastership, on the other to life-long servitude.

But the new Heloise, unlike the old, retained possession of her faculties; she was soon mistress of herself. With firm hands she released herself from Abel's tiger-like grip, and the next moment had her finger on the electric button. Then she quietly sat down and motioned to Abel, who was standing a few paces away, still bewildered with his late intoxicating rapture, to seat himself likewise.

He finally did so, but so slowly and reluctantly that the servant entered while he was still standing and regarding Heloise with eyes that devoured her. The girl took no notice of him,

but looked at Heloise inquiringly, and it must be confessed with a smile.

"We are ready, Nettie, for tea," said Heloise in her most matter-of-fact and business-like tones.

"Yes'm," responded the girl, as she quickly departed.

By this time Abel had managed to sit down. Nevertheless, the moment the door had closed, he rushed over to Heloise to say beseechingly:

"My dear one, can you ever trust me again?"

"I am the one to blame," replied she promptly. "I wantonly offered two kisses when you respectfully asked for one. My thoughtless action has led me to wonder if the religious teachers of the past have not had good reasons for restricting and degrading woman as they have done. You know that St. Augustine declared, 'We have to beware of Eve in *every* woman, no matter who she is.' I sincerely beg your pardon, Abelard; I shall be more careful in the future."

Abel for a moment wore a crestfallen air, as if his future did not hold for him all that he could wish; then he rallied.

"Let us kiss and make up," urged he, quite willing to be tempted again.

"Agreed," said Heloise, laughing, "provided you give me the kiss from a distance."

"At how many paces?" he asked, perceiving

that though she was in a merry mood she meant strictly what she said.

"Oh, that arm-chair by the little table will do. But you will have to be in haste, for the maid will soon be back."

Abel seated himself at once — which was what Heloise was maneuvering for — and having thrown one kiss with very amusing but only fairly satisfactory results, he followed suit with others, until he was pulled up with a shock by the noiseless entrance of Nettie with the tray. To such imbecility does love frequently reduce the wisest and best of men!

A little repast, consisting of strawberries, cream, cakes, and tea, was temptingly spread out on the table by Abel's side.

"Is there anything else you would like, Miss Mills," asked the maid.

"I think not, Nettie. Thank you."

Nettie closed the door securely behind her, for she had already come to the conclusion that these two were lovers.

When the cakes and strawberries had disappeared, and they were sipping their tea, Abel bethought him to ask:

"Now, tell me, what have you done since you reached Denver?"

"Do you really think the acts of a woman are worth recording?"

"Certainly! That is to be part of my new

creed — equal recognition, equal justice to man and woman; and public statues and commemorative tablets, windows, and so forth and ditto, to worth and nobility in either sex."

Heloise laughed heartily. "I never hear 'ditto' but I am reminded of the man who, after an absence, was looking over the domestic accounts and became alarmed at the frequency of the word, to the meaning of which his wife could give him no clue — she could only assure him she would never get so much of it again. Finally he ran to the butcher and when he came back his wife asked, 'What did you find out?' 'Susan,' he replied rather reluctantly, 'I found out that you are a fool and that I am a ditto!' Well, as a rule, men are fools and women ditto, but I think there would be many more exceptions if my sex received the same encouragement and rewards for well doing as yours."

"True, quite true," murmured the new Abelard, sipping the remains of his tea slowly and thoughtfully. The attitude of both had become thoughtful, with this difference; that while Abel seemed to have entered the realm of dreamy meditation, Heloise appeared aflame with pent-up energy: so much so that two perpendicular lines — very faint as yet — showed themselves between her eyes.

"Abelard, I read to-day in a magazine something that impressed me. The article was en-

titled 'Feminine Mind Worship.' The writer claims there are two types of minds, the masculine and the feminine, and naturally adds, too, that the masculine mind is productive and the feminine mind unproductive. Now one would suppose that woman would have a monopoly of the feminine mind, and that in her it would reach its completest development. But, no — this writer declares that the feminine mind is most highly developed in clergymen, and that for twenty centuries they have practically stopped all development of the masculine mind. Only during the last century does he admit that the masculine has broken loose and the result is civilization."

"Well, I think the man speaks the truth. The religious men of the past have certainly done all they could to sterilize the mind of woman. If, in the pursuit of this barbarous practice, they have sterilized their own, it is a just retribution. Thank heaven, though I, too, am a clergyman, I have been enabled to break loose from that control!"

"And you are going to give me a bit of credit for helping you to break away? Admit now, that I at least helped set you to thinking."

"Yes, dearest, to you belongs my awakening. Certainly, I should have had no such terrible travail of spirit from which came the new birth but for your firm stand in respect to marriage."

Abelard reached out his arm across the little table and placed his hand affectionately on those of Heloise. For a moment each gazed deep into one another's eyes.

Abel presently said, "Ah, but how about your doings since you reached here? Come, tell me!"

"Oh, Abelard, I must shelve the record for to-night. I am very tired. My affairs are many and complicated. I must not only eat well but sleep well to do them justice. And I suppose I ought to dress well! I have been trying to pay some attention to that since the man with the hoe suggested that it was a part of my duty."

Abelard withdrew his arm with a precipitancy that was anything but graceful; still, he asked as mildly as his perturbed spirit would admit:

"How about that man with the hoe? I was told he showed you around his place and entertained you in fine style; and, moreover, fell head-over-heels in love with you."

"Nothing more to-night, Abelard, *caro mio*. I am 'dead tired,' as the slang phrase has it. How expressive slang is sometimes. To-morrow you shall ask all the questions you please, and I will endeavor to give you coherent answers. But for to-night — I am finished."

She rose and extended her hand to him. Abel made a virtue of necessity and rose also,

clasped Heloise's hand in his, looked unutterable things into her eyes, and reluctantly took his leave.

Heloise had spoken the truth, as usual — she was "dead tired." Ten minutes after his departure she was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXI
A GODDESS OF LIBERTY



"THE United States is the first great nation to be faced with a problem which bids fair to cast its shadow over the whole world — the growing tyranny of Mammon. No wonder that it is creating a convulsion in their politics and that the Republicans find themselves between the alternative risks of losing the people or the financiers." — *The London Daily News.*

"'WOMEN will lose the chivalrous attentions of men if they are enfranchised,' was another argument of the distrustful anti-suffragist. To the women who are influenced by such a prophecy of man falling from his high estate when he finds woman his political equal, I would say: 'My dear friends, your fears are groundless. You place a high value on the chivalrous attentions that men now show you. Why, you have not the remotest idea of the vast stores of chivalry hidden away in the inner recesses of man's nature. When you get a vote you will find that the chivalry of the middle ages was a poor thing in comparison with that of the twentieth century. The chivalrous attentions paid by candidates to women voters are most embarrassing — Sir Walter Raleighs and De Lorges are thick as leaves in Vallombrosa at election time."— *Vida Goldstein.*

XXI

A Goddess of Liberty



THE next evening Heloise appeared downstairs in a new and gracefully fitting robe made of some thin black material, which was exceedingly becoming to her. She had relented towards her beautiful hair and let some tiny locks here and there stray about her forehead and neck, and coil themselves into delicate rings. A cluster of white roses pinned on her breast relieved her rather somber dress.

She was looking over some papers beneath the soft light of a large lamp when the servant ushered in her expected guest. They greeted one another with love-lit eyes and extended hands.

"And how is my Heloise to-night?" he asked, retaining possession of both her hands.

"Quite well, and you, *caro?*"

The caressing word emboldened him to raise each fair hand in turn to his lips. He reluctantly dropped them. "How can you ask?" he said a little reproachfully. "Have I not the appearance of a man newly crowned?"

"You surely look better than I have ever seen you," she replied as she seated him in the big

armchair. "Your new religion seems to act as a tonic."

"No, as a food. A religion in which Fear is cast out — I am beginning to learn — is the best kind of food for health and sanity. Then a new and expanded love for woman, quickened through intense love for *one* woman, is taking the premature stoop out of my shoulders and the droop from my lips."

"So I perceive and I like you better so, though I fell in love with you in spite of stoop and droop."

Both laughed and looked fondly into each other's eyes until Abel was tempted to ask her if he might not have some more practice in the arts of either administering or throwing kisses. Perceiving, however, that she took on a serious air, as her gaze turned to the pile of papers on the table, and that the two perpendicular lines began to show in her finely molded forehead, he remarked:

"I am afraid you will soon lose that softly smiling, tranquil, Madonna-of-the-Grand-Duke air if you are not careful!"

"Ah, *'tis* a problem — how to retain Madonna-like graces when one has fallen heir to five or six millions."

"Heloise! What are you talking about?" Abel looked thoroughly mystified, for he knew she was not given to idle words.

"Why, have you not heard of my brother's death, and that he left his entire fortune — including that of his uncle, whose death preceded his own — to *me?*"

He did not answer immediately, then he said:

"I recall now that the little boy near Pasadena who showed me over the place told me you had received news of a long-lost brother who had been living all the years you thought him dead, and that the same letter which informed you of this fact also gave notice of his death. Dear Love, I am very sorry for you!"

He went quickly over to her side and pressed a kiss on her forehead in the tenderest manner. If there was passion in the kiss it was passion in repose. Tears slowly gathered in her eyes and one of them had the audacity to fall on a paper of great importance. She quickly brushed it off, saying:

"I find a good many complaints about women who attempt to transact business. That tear splotching a neatly executed document would seem to bear out the truth of these assertions."

"That tear testifies to the tenderness of a woman's heart. I suspect that we need a lot of that tenderness in our business affairs right now, for the times seem to me to be very hard, unsympathetic and materialistic. The wheels of Mammon are pressing us all hard." Abel reseated himself with a sigh. Presently he said

thoughtfully, and with his dreamy air: "And your brother has reappeared in your life only to disappear beyond hope of return."

Heloise hastened to brush away another tear as she replied, "The dream so long entertained in secret that we might meet again in the flesh is quite dispelled. It only remains that I should endeavor to acquit myself in the best manner possible of the responsibility he has bequeathed to me."

"And so he has left you an enormous sum of money to play with," mused Abel.

She smiled faintly as she answered, "That is too much the fashion of to-day. Indeed, I sometimes think this might with truth be called the gambling age. Where the tendency will lead us, remains to be seen."

"If only we could get all our gambling millionaires into an automobile, and put one of them who had imbibed too much in control, with full speed on, as happened lately with one couple—"

"O Abel, how blood-thirsty you have suddenly become! Surely, there is some way of controlling this gambling spirit — to extinguish it is of course impossible — so that our material affairs shall rest on a more secure basis and our plain people regain their lost liberties and heritage without bloodshed. I am so sin-

cere an evolutionist that I have no taste for revolutions."

"Birth is usually accompanied by the shedding of blood," he replied.

"Physical birth, yes. But what the people need now is a national re-birth of the normal order. Do you recall what Sumner said when people accused him of being in politics?"

"No, I know little of politics or politicians."

"He used to reply, 'I am not in politics, I am in morals,' and he did his best to give our people moral notions respecting the treatment of a race whose skin happened to be black instead of white."

"But it was finally settled by the shedding of blood, if I remember aright."

"Ah, but that was more than a quarter of a century ago. We are a riper people now and have grown more thoughtful. Moreover, arbitration is now becoming the order of the day."

"True, true. Europe, armed to the teeth, talks eloquently of arbitration, but I can't forget our misunderstanding with Spain, and that of England with two fairly well-governed little republics, and the China episode — very bloody and very disgraceful. No! I am not very optimistic in respect to even moral re-births taking place without the shedding of blood. And if blood is to be shed, why, naturally, I prefer that the blood of the guilty should flow rather than

that of the innocent, the brave, and the true. That is why I suggest that a pretty generous automobile accident, taking in the most dangerous enemies that this Republic has, might not be a national calamity. There is no doubt but that South African millionaires were the power behind the English Government which closed up the business of the little republics. Our concern now is to see the biggest of all republics save itself from Frankensteins of its own creation."

The two faint perpendicular lines showed up quite plainly between Heloise's straight eyebrows as she replied:

"But there are millionaires and millionaires. Please remember that your Heloise is now one, and that the question before us is how I am to become a good and helpful millionaire; or if that is impossible, to wisely distribute the large amount placed at my disposal. You must help me solve this problem, Abelard."

"It is the fashion of the times, I believe, for those who are called good millionaires to devote a portion of their fortunes to charity in some shape."

"I am sick of the very word *charity!* I prefer justice to charity, in my relations with my fellow beings. Of course, there are many instances where charity, either organized or individual, must come to the aid of the unfortunate, but

when you consider that we have charity everywhere and justice almost nowhere, it behooves those who have the expansion of the race at heart to set a new fashion and make charity and justice change places!"

"But how do you propose to bring about a change so radical — for radical it is — considering that our experiment of having a government of, by, and for the people has largely merged into a government of, by, and for the capitalists, and is now busy imitating England of the present, or Rome of the past, in empire building. Our free school system was expected to lay the foundations of a true republic, so firm and solid that nothing could subvert it. But it has failed."

"And Carnegie is busy supplementing our free school system with free libraries for the people," added Heloise, tapping her foot on the floor in a rhythmic manner, as she occasionally did when thinking aloud.

For a time they both remained silent, lost in reverie.

"Ah, free schools," broke in Heloise, "are necessary to discipline the minds of the young and to lay the foundation of an education. Free libraries are useful to our literary class and people who have more or less leisure at their command, only I wish that they might all be founded by the people themselves, like the famous library at Boston. However, it is a

fact that *the newspaper* has come to reign supreme as an educator of our adult, busy people. But our press is not free! It is owned and controlled largely by our capitalist class, which also has paramount influence over our Government. It stands to reason that such a press will not instruct the people in respect to their own interests — neither is our present Government fit to protect these interests. Indeed, our press is becoming more and more imperialistic in its teaching, when it deigns to teach anything. Its present tendency is to *amuse* rather than to instruct. If anything serious is taking place or about to take place, in which thousands of the people's lives and millions of the people's money may be jeopardized, or lost — such as a war — then how much confidence can be placed in what one reads?"

"But how can this difficulty of a misleading press, which prefers to treat the people to circuses rather than to plain truth, and to extol charity rather than stand for justice, be gotten over? The equipment of a big daily paper is a very expensive affair. The people will hesitate long about adding to their taxes in order to establish a free press in addition to free schools."

Heloise paused a moment before replying. She gazed in an abstracted manner into the eyes of Abel, and he returned her gaze with a smile. It rather pleased him to see that a woman could

soar to heights which were not of a personal nature; to be lost, as it were, in infinity.

Presently she said, "The truth is, man by nature is a monopolist. Woman goes to the other extreme and withholds nothing from those she loves, so that on the one hand we have the one sex seeking all and the other sex yielding all. Of course, there are many exceptions, men who are quite as self-sacrificing as women, and clear-sighted women who see that to yield all to the control of man is to betray the interests of the race."

"Then you are not thinking of giving your millions to some municipality in order to aid in the establishment of a free press for at least a fragment of the people?"

"Oh, I have thought of it! but suppose I were to do this and the gift were accepted; the paper would be run by men and we should have a partisan kind of a paper, much like those that exist to-day. From the beginning man has tried to run things alone and he has never given us, and in the nature of things *cannot* give us—either a free, non-partisan press, or a government of the people — for the obvious reason that *he alone* does not constitute the people! With only half of the divine elements active in his breast he cannot even truly *represent* them. Am I not right?"

Heloise asked this question with a very win-

ning smile, fearing that reason alone would not induce him to accept views which he must lately, as an orthodox minister, have regarded with suspicion.

"What an insatiable young woman you are, Heloise! Having got me to change the religion bequeathed me by my ancestors, you now desire me to change my politics!"

"Bequeathed by the same ancestors," added Heloise quickly, "and equally monopolistic in spirit and tendency. The one tends to revert to religious autocracy, having for its head the Pope, the other to a political autocracy, led by some strenuous, gifted man of the military or millionaire type. Cecil Rhodes lately ruled England, and a strenuous group of millionaires rule our country, behind our figureheads. But I see you are tired. Abelard, I am desperately in earnest, and if my gropings after light weary you, do not scruple to call a halt."

"Your voice is music to me, even in argument, Heloise, though I never sought argument for its own sake — doubtless because I am poor at it. Some one has said that preachers make poor debaters, because they cannot get accustomed to being contradicted. I feel the truth of it."

"It may have a touch of truth, most aphorisms have, but it is nice of you to turn a phrase like that instead of boldly telling me you are tired to death of my earnestness. Ah, Abelard,

man has broadened 'with the progress of the sun' since the time that Bouchet was not ashamed to write, 'From a braying mule and a girl who speaks Latin, Good Lord deliver us!'"

They both laughed heartily at this. Then Abel said: "After you have decided what is best to do with your millions, you will rest a little from big problems and become commonplace for my sake, won't you, Heloise?"

"Yes, Abel, I may yet turn out the coziest kind of a housewife. But I can do something for you in that line even now. You have probably been taking long walks in this lovely town. Let me ring for Nettie and her tray."

He came towards her and grasped her hand. She covered his hand with her own disengaged one and pressing it warmly said: "Go right back and sit decorously opposite me, Abel, while we talk."

CHAPTER XXII
ABELARD'S APPEAL



"ACCORDING to Mr. Carnegie, the existence of millionaires is the best gauge of the prosperity of the mass of the people. The condition of the masses, he says, is satisfactory just as the country is blessed with millionaires. That is a fine paradox which Mr. Carnegie would be pushed to defend, if we were to test it, say by the condition of the Roman populace in the days preceding the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth. The chief feature in Roman society in that degenerate age was the enormous fortunes of the millionaires of the senate. Gibbon tells us that the senators had incomes from their estates amounting to three or four hundred thousand pounds per annum. The Roman Senate was even more a rich man's club than is the senate of Washington. But were the masses of the people ever more degraded or demoralized than in the days when millionaires abounded in the capital of the Old World?" — *W. T. Stead.*

XXII

Abelard's Appeal



"WELL, I am waiting to learn what you purpose doing with those millions, if charity is to play no part in their distribution?" Abel said tentatively.

Nettie had just departed with the tray when he asked this question. He was really eager to learn what his Heloise contemplated doing in her novel and complex situation; besides it was late and he feared she might send him home. He must, therefore, interest her in such a manner that she would forget the flight of time.

"I have not decided upon anything — not even whether millionaires are a blessing or a curse to a country. It is my impression, though, that America is overdoing the millionaire business, and should study now how *not* to make millionaires, and also how to regain her lost power in governmental affairs."

Heloise spoke with eager interest and all traces of fatigue disappeared as by magic.

Abel smiled at his success and began to regard himself as a diplomat of no mean order. He readjusted his newly nourished body in his armchair as if he had taken on a new lease of

time. In fact, so pleased was he with the success of his ruse that he lost track of what Heloise was saying and was obliged to admit the fact.

"Forgive me," he begged, "my mind wanders occasionally to-night. The fact is that you are so distractingly beautiful that I find myself now and then in a state of adoration when I should be mentally alert; since not every day is one called upon to decide the fate of millions."

"I said I thought America was overdoing the millionaire-making business and should study how *not* to make them and at the same time regain her lost — or pretty nearly lost — control of governmental affairs."

"Right you are, my Heloise. But now, while I am interested in my country's affairs, so much so that I shall take the trouble to vote in the future —"

"What! Do you mean to say that you have not exercised your sacred privilege of casting your ballot in the past?"

"Dear Love, if you only knew how arduous are the duties of a sincere minister of the Gospel with a big congregation on his hands, you would not be astonished when I admit that I have had no time to inform myself either on the great issues of the day or to make myself acquainted, even in a cursory manner, with the merits or demerits of the selected candidates. Most of the men I know vote blindly with their party. 'My

party, right or wrong,' is their watchword. By birth and breeding I am a Republican, and before I became a minister I voted always the Republican ticket, but lately it has seemed to me that my party has stood for the concentration of capital into the hands of the few — whether meaning to do so or not — until it has become a menace to the liberties of the American people. With that notion in my head — which I had not time to either corroborate or dispel — I have of late years refused to vote at all. My sin has been one of omission rather than one of commission."

"Ah, my poor Abelard! You must treat yourself to a long vacation in order to catch up with modern civilization."

Abel indulged in a hearty laugh and succeeded in firing a tiny pellet of paper very close to Heloise's pink ear. Then he asked with a merry twinkle in his eye:

"How long a vacation do you think I shall need in order to catch up with modern civilization?"

"Oh, with your naturally good mind, which is now quite alert, two or three years of freedom should enable you to bring public questions up to date and to see the world to boot. Very busy men and women, who have got into narrow ruts of thinking and feeling, ought to treat them-

selves to long vacations now and then, in order to enlarge their usefulness."

"Why can we not, both of us, join some world-touring group of people and see this little spotty globe together?" suggested he impetuously. "Come, say yes! it would be the next best thing to getting married and making for ourselves a new and unique kind of paradise in which the Devil of Discontent should be securely barred out." Abel rose quickly, his face aflame with love, and held out his hands towards her in a beseeching attitude. He dared not approach closer lest he should forget himself, and that, he knew, would spell ruin to any hope of her agreeing to such a plan as he suggested.

A look of pain swept over the usually serene face of Heloise as she said: "My dear Abelard, please sit down and let us talk the matter over calmly. Only in that way can the still small voice of reason make itself heard. But before we try to think whether it would be well for the reputation and character of two such lovers as you and I to place ourselves in a situation which would involve us in almost hourly contact, extremely close at times, let me ask you one question: Do you believe I ought to leave my post? Please bear in mind that I am in the best of health, that my life has been one of preparation, and that as yet I have done nothing. You, on the contrary, have lived a life of toil, ten years

of which have been sufficiently full of grave responsibilities and crushing duties to kill most men by the time they arrive at middle age. Then in addition to my never having done anything to warrant a long vacation — or a short one, for that matter — Providence has seen fit to place at my disposal several millions of our people's money; a large amount, as things go, and carrying with it a good deal of actual power. Having accepted this sceptre, I should, it seems to me, lose no time in learning how to wield it — so long as it is mine — to the best advantage of as many people as possible."

Abel, who had remained standing during this little speech, now seated himself with a pensive, almost mournful air.

"I suppose you are right, Heloise," he said at last, "and yet how can we bear that long separation? Two or three years! It seems an eternity! Our hearts will have bled themselves dry long before that time is past. We may become automatons, like so many people we see about us. Or perhaps I shall be housed in an insane asylum. How does that prospect please you?"

Heloise found it impossible not to smile, though her smile was pensive.

"Oh, you are too well balanced and have too much common sense to go insane. I will turn prophet for a change and predict that you

will find the two or three years spent abroad the most fruitful and happy of your whole existence."

"Impossible! You do not know what you are talking about, Heloise. Look into your own heart and put by your Spartan concealment and tell me frankly, how does this long separation strike you? Do you expect to be happy, with immense stretches of land and water between us?"

"Dear Abelard, I expect to be very busy — and at intervals very happy — when looking at the infinite and varied beauty of this world and learning through you of the wonderful things man has done in the Old World. Think of your trained eye and eloquent pen! Ah, yes, once a week I expect to revel in the happiness of a letter from your hand, the contents to be absorbed by my heart."

Abel's countenance underwent a swift change. The pain disappeared and a look of tenderness replaced it — so beaming and persistent that the woman he loved flushed a rosy pink.

Presently, he broke the spell by asking abruptly, "You have not yet given me any real hint, notwithstanding our two long talks, of how you are to disperse those millions, as it appears that you are not inclined to be charitable with them."

She treated him to one of her archest smiles as she said:

"No, charity is the petted darling of the multi-millionaire, and I shall not make a business of it."

Abel smiled a curious sort of smile, which made her pause and regard him with the question marks in her eyes. As he did not enlighten her she felt constrained to say, "You seem greatly amused at something in connection with me, but I am at a loss to guess what it is. Tell me and let us share the fun together."

"It is impossible. How can *you* see how very incongruous you look, trying to wed yourself to any business — you, with your sweet, Madonna countenance and lips made to be kissed and to kiss in return. Heloise, my own sweet love, give your millions away, quickly, and have done with them! They will soil you and perhaps *spoil* you if they linger in your life. God meant you to be a perfect wife and a devoted mother. Why not be true to yourself, true to your real vocation?"

Heloise slowly but firmly shook her head.

"Because the way is barred by a flaming sword which flashes itself in every direction. The name of that flaming sword is sex-monopoly. I mean to do what I can with the means at my command to annihilate this obstacle, which bars out mankind from paradise."

Abel sighed. His presentiment had come true. Aloud he said:

"A big order, and one that will keep us as far apart as that Abelard and Heloise whose pathetic story has moved the world — for sex-monopoly will die hard. It was established, according to the Bible, with the first couple, and it has been in constant practice ever since."

"And man has known no real peace during all that time," she added promptly. "In fact, it is the basis of all monopolies, for monopoly is greed for control. Ah, Abelard, *mio*, you will help me to stand bravely and use my power perseveringly for the equality of the sexes at the marriage altar?"

"Heloise, don't you take that question too seriously?"

"Abelard, if men and women are ever to be serious in anything that is the time and the place. With the single exception of the hour when Death approaches, it is the most serious moment in life."

After a pause — "But dearest, we could work so much better together."

He left his seat and approached her. His dark eyes were glowing. She was seated near the table, tapping it lightly with her pencil. Heloise had lost some of her usual tranquillity, and she apprehended some trying scenes which she well knew would be fatal to the immediate

peace of both. Besides, she distrusted herself. How could she always turn a deaf ear to tones so tender and glances so full of love, — love so pathetic and pleading, even when only his eyes spoke for him, that her heart turned traitor to her stern resolve and her mind searched for reasons to make her comply with his wishes. Ah, how easy, how tempting for woman to become the slave of the man she adores and purchase bliss by spoiling her mate. For no man long loves a wife willing to play the part of vassal in his life. Often he prefers the society of a mistress to such compliance.

When Abelard had approached close, so close that one look of yielding love would have placed her completely in his power, she arose with her newly assumed business air, glanced at her watch and said with firmness:

"Abelard *mio*, just see what time it is! We must at once separate for needed rest. Good-night, *caro*. Come again to-morrow night and I will tell you definitely what I propose to do with my inheritance. You will yield an attentive ear I am sure. For I have observed that so long as two persons are lovers they are good listeners — to each other."

"Then you think your words would fall on a barred mind if we were married?"

He was holding the hand he had secured as if he meant to retain it forever.

"Why not? Why should you care to listen to one whom the law places beneath you, and to whom you promise to play the part of a master. Masters are notoriously impatient of anything like comradeship with their inferiors. But once more, good-night, Abelard! If separations are hard to bear, recall how sweet are our meetings. To-morrow night I shall be awaiting you with a heart full of the tenderest love."

"Dear Heloise," he said as he turned sadly away, "your professions of love but mock my ardor. The unknown masses of our people stand between us. I am afraid I shall never be able to rise to your altruistic heights."

CHAPTER XXIII
THE STORM



"To-night God knows what things shall tide,
The earth is racked and faint —
Expectant, sleepless, open-eyed;
And we who from the earth were made,
Thrill with our mother's pain."

"The lack of the people is not the lack of intelligence, of knowledge, of experience, not a lack of mind or of body, for physical culture has made a long stride in a single decade, and the strong soul in the strong body is no longer an exceptional sight. The lack of our civilization is not the lack of faith only. It is the lack of spirituality. The things that are seen have encroached upon the things that are unseen and spiritual." — *Mary Clemmer.*

"One wonders why men and women are so afraid of entering into the fullest possible relations of life, of opening their minds to every sort of truth, of spending and being spent for the sake of others, of cultivating sympathetic relations with all classes." — *Helen Bigelow Merriman.*

"He that will not stir until he infallibly knows that the business he goes about will succeed will have but little else to do but to sit still and perish." — *John Locke.*

XXIII

The Storm



"WOMEN who feel much and think little spend and are spent on charity in some of its many disguised forms. Women who think much and feel little are apt to imitate my own sex and deal with life and money in a purely ambitious spirit. You both think and feel, and luck has dowered you while young with a great fortune. I begin to be very curious as to how you will dispose of it?"

Abel and Heloise were sitting nearer together than usual; he in a big armchair near the center table; she with a pencil in the hand which rested on the table. She was dressed precisely the same as the evening before, only instead of roses there were violets pinned on her bodice. She wore no jewelry; not because she did not admire beautiful things made of gold and silver and precious stones, but merely because she had not yet recovered from the severity of her father's training, and the influence of a certain Spartan New England cult whose ethics unconsciously shaped her daily habits of thought and action.

The day had been lowering and now with night had come the indications of a storm. In-

stead of replying immediately to Abel's question, Heloise said:

"Tell me first, dear, how you would redistribute this large accumulation of property, supposing *you* had fallen heir to it, instead of me?"

"That would have been an easy question to answer six months ago. I should have used it to spread the religion of Christ — or what goes by that name. Now that so much connected with the name seems to me absurd and childish and fatal to human progress, I am at a loss to know what I should do with it. Possibly I might become an imitator of Mr. Carnegie in a small way, and use my money to assist the people in getting easy access to libraries, museums, and art galleries, for books, pictures, music and architecture are all civilizing agents and help to lift man out of the mire and prepare him for fuller spiritual developments."

"Yes, no doubt, money spent in that way is not misspent. But is it not true that before the people at large can rightly make use of these civilizing agencies, they must secure the precious gift of more freedom from beastly toil?"

Neither of the lovers spoke for a moment, but simply gazed thoughtfully into each other's eyes. Finally Abel said very seriously:

"I begin to understand. You propose to spend your millions in the endeavor to secure more liberty for the people."

"Abelard, dear, you are a seer, and likely to make a latter-day prophet after you have spent your forty days in the wilderness of Europe, Asia, and Africa. At any rate you have guessed my secret. My millions are to be spent in the cause of more liberty!"

Abel threw the hair off his forehead and gave Heloise a mischievous glance.

"I read only to-day," he said, "that liberty such as people believed in half a century ago is bankrupt."

"Oh, that is nothing. Liberty has been in a state of chronic bankruptcy ever since the world began."

"But the situation is really serious this time, for what we know as monopoly — and our fathers knew as Mammon — orders governments and press to do his bidding, and has secured in addition the ceaseless and often deadly activity of countless machines to serve his interests and make of him a god to whom the people must bow and cringe."

Abel sighed, while Heloise, whom nothing seemed to daunt, replied:

"All true gods, whether in the flesh or otherwise, work for the good of the people, and if these new captains of industry do not thus work they are false gods which should not have the suffrages of the people. The test of godship is — does the god bring the people more and

fuller life, or does he deprive them of it for his own personal gain."

"Ah, but the point is to get the people to realize who among them are true gods and who are false. They are as puzzled now as in the time of Christ, and in the meantime the spirit of Monopoly is enslaving them in a more deadly manner than ever before, and the true friends of the people are mercilessly silenced in one way or in another."

"Thank heaven, it is not possible to crucify the good to-day or slaughter the innocent!" returned Heloise with an optimistic smile.

"How about our modern concentration camps, which destroy women and children by the thousands?"

Abelard was in a very cynical mood, having spent the day in studying the political situation. He had been preaching Christ and Him crucified so faithfully for years past that he was quite ignorant of much that was taking place under his eyes. He was now bent on enlightening himself and his first draught of knowledge had been a bitter one.

"Oh, let us put the dreadful pictures of lust of gold out of our minds and consider how best to educate the people to look after their own interests — teach them not to intrust them so completely to self-seekers. Sometimes it seems to me that people really tempt men to become

tyrants by being so helpless, so servile, so ignorant. It was once my business to hand around a petition of a political nature. I don't know how many men who pass for good and intelligent citizens told me they never meddled with politics. 'It is a filthy pool, better keep clear of it,' they said. Such people ought to be well ground under the heel of tyranny, until they are willing to take their proper share in governing the nation — which is *themselves*."

"Yes, but who has taught them it is a filthy pool, and who has advised them to let politics alone?"

"Ah, Abelard, every word you speak to-night makes me more convinced that I have made a good choice as to how employ, or perhaps sink, my millions. I mean to establish a paper which shall be independent, unprejudiced; where people can find something like the truth, and whose editorials shall discuss both sides of every question in an impartial spirit."

"Ah!" said Abel after a pause. "Will you produce a big Sunday paper?"

Abel put this question tentatively. He was not sure but that Heloise, with her dislike of orthodoxy, might think it no sin to utilize the one day in the week which custom has delivered into the hands of the clergy for the planting of spiritual seed.

"As I intend my paper to fight monopoly in

all its many disguises and ramifications it would not be consistent for me to play the part of monopolist myself and issue it every day in the week. Besides, it would not be in good taste for a woman manager of a daily paper to issue a big commercial edition on the Sabbath. Women are nothing if not religious."

"But the people appear to like the big Sunday paper which capitalism prepares for them. They buy immense quantities of that sort of bait."

"True, they *have* done so. I think, however, they are beginning to realize that the capitalist press has been largely their undoing. I believe that if excellent six-day papers are established they will patronize them. They will eventually come to understand that no secular paper which monopolizes every day in the week can successfully fight Monopoly. Ah," said Heloise, with sudden energy, "what a desecration of the dawn of a quiet Sunday morning is this unloading of cart-loads —"

"Car-loads," interposed Abel.

"You are right — of car-loads of worldliness on the still wearied people!"

"Yet, they will buy it — by the car-loads — and read it to more than weariness — to stupidity!" Abel spoke as if disgusted more with the people than with that insinuating Sunday morning visitor — the big newspaper.

"Oh, it is tempting bait, Abel. It lies there on your threshold, ready to entice you the moment you open your door. It is so gay with colored inks, so artistic with cleverly drawn pictures — and the people are naturally so curious. They wonder what new thing they shall see, what new idea find — and the law-breakers, what mischief are they brewing or accomplishing? If in society, or aping it, they want to see how new gowns are going to be made; they want to learn where the milliners are and what they are doing. If athletic, the sporting portion of the paper entices them to scan its columns at breakfast, retarding their digestion. Many a woman bent on acquiring a good complexion or a handsome figure cannot put the temptation by, and wait till the morrow to pay attention to the things of the flesh, but uses the Sunday rest for it. And the dear little children, who have frolicked all the week! they, too, cannot wait till another day comes, but must pore over four pages of horse-play in crude colors. As for the pounds of advertisements and highly spiced news unloaded, that is also absorbed by hundreds of thousands of weary workers and men and women already dead to spiritual influences.

"I mean to get out a gay, rollicking, worldly paper, full of amusement and sport, on Saturday. On Sunday, I shall let the ministers have a clear

field, so far as my paper is concerned. Then on Monday, being a woman and therefore a lover of the clergy and their ways, I mean to still further encourage the ministers, who are now buried under an avalanche of Sunday papers. That is, the progressive ones, the more advanced thinkers, who keep in touch with the times. Those who want to give to the readers of this anti-monopoly sheet their sermons of the previous day, *boiled down*, can do so; and they shall be well paid for their work, if accepted."

Abel got up and walked about the room with a meditative air. She watched him, wondering what was in his mind. Presently, he stood before her and said with very great anxiety:

"I don't know but that you will find your newspaper project a quick method of redistributing your large fortune, but that does not alarm me as much as the fear that it will mar your charming personality and wreck your health."

"Oh, if one makes up his mind to do something worthy in the interest of the people, he should be willing to risk the ruin of both purse and health."

She smiled into Abel's eyes reassuringly. She had evidently counted the cost of her undertaking and was ready to pay it.

"It must be done," she said enthusiastically;

"if not by the woman of America, then by *a woman* of America. I was examining, only this afternoon, a page advertisement of next Sunday's edition of a great metropolitan paper. The star feature is to be the 'Burning Love Letters,' written to a notorious French ballet-dancer, by 'Kings, Princes, Dukes, Aristocrats' (a nice distinction), 'and other celebrities.' The next important items are to be 'Your Complexion,' by a well-advertised Italian expert, and 'Your Autumn Gowns,' by a fashionable New York dressmaker. Then the 'full details' of the newest romance in the life of a popular New York actress, and, as a fitting climax to the so-called adult part of this intellectual treat, a 'music supplement,' 'The Newest Song Hit' — 'I Ain't Goin' to Mat-a Loo-Loo —' words and music."

"Good!" said Abel. "Very typical."

"And the 'children are not forgotten,' as the advertisement says," added Heloise. "I could wish that they were! For their little *blasé* brains are pictures of the latest fashions in 'Smart School Clothes,' and enough puzzles and games and 'cut-outs' to occupy their dear minds all day, to the exclusion of better thoughts or reading."

She then outlined to him her plan for cultivating sympathetic relations with all classes, and for surrounding herself with the best of as-

sistance, and for giving her co-workers the sort of inducement which would call forth their noblest efforts. She planned to establish her paper in Chicago, which she looked upon as the heart of the United States. Those of its citizens whom monopoly had deprived of the wherewithal to pay for a daily paper she would send the sheet to, gratis; provided it was ascertained they really wanted it and were not able to pay for it.

Abel watched her with a grave but slightly smiling aspect. Finally he asked:

"Can't you find room for me on that great daily which is to stand for truth, equality, non-partisanship, and is to give monopoly some hard blows? I would like to take a hand in the fray."

"Oh, yes, indeed! Your name stands first on the list of contributors. I felt sure your many gifts of head and heart would be placed as freely as possible at my disposal. I mean to make the Saturday paper very ample and an extra good one. Surely, you will contribute to it as often as circumstances permit. I am counting on your help. You are to discuss any subject you like. I want my Abelard for once in his life to enjoy the bracing air of freedom, and to speak out freely and fearlessly the things which nature and nature's God reveal to him."

"What do you propose to call this ambitious venture of yours?"

"I think of calling it 'The New Times.'"

"Why not call it 'The Commonwealth'? Bryan has named his 'The Commoner,' which does not mean half so much?"

For a moment Heloise did not reply, only looked at Abel in a thoughtful manner. He waited patiently until she repeated quite slowly:

"'The — Common-Wealth.' I like your suggestion. It is a good one, when thoroughly grasped. I will ring for tea and over the cups we can consider the merits and demerits of the two names."

The wind rose higher and the rain poured pitilessly down while the lovers formulated plans, which, however well they might work for the good of others, meant self-effacement for themselves.

Abel for a time sat silent, looking ruminatingly into his cup. Truth to tell his thoughts were not centered on the public weal but on how he could best introduce another plea for himself.

"Heloise," he asked at length, "do the elements affect you?"

"Always; I am a human barometer and feel weather changes long before they appear."

"Does a night like this make you selfishly glad you are under cover?"

"Abel, it is hardly fair to press home like that.

Dearest, I often hug my own comforts, even to forgetfulness of unfortunates who may be without cover."

"To-night then seems a fitting time for me to ask you to withdraw from the people, the world, for a space, and concentrate upon yourself and me. Darling, does not the friendlessness outside make you yearn for a corner somewhere in God's wide universe sacred to you and me alone?"

A shiver passed visibly over her frame and she involuntarily put her hands over her face as she murmured, "Abel, do not tempt me from my duty as I see it!"

"Duty be d——!" suddenly burst passionately from his lips.

Her hands dropped and she sat upright staring at him with dilating pupils.

"Abel Allen, late minister of the Gospel!" she ejaculated.

"I repeat it! I mean it! Duty as commonly taught and commonly practised is a fraud and a failure. Look about you and see how it works among individuals and families — one person more sensitively organized than the others committing a slow but sure suicide in order that life may be made easier for those who never even see what the slave to duty is doing! How many fine natures are stunted, how many careers spoiled, through the twiddling cares which the strong and generous permit the weak and selfish

to lay upon them. Heloise, my love, my daily routine as a minister of the Gospel has brought all phases of this sort of thing under my notice. I have seen enacted many times over the parable of the goose that lays the golden egg. The same holds true through the whole gamut of life, whether public or private. Why, common, canny selfishness is notoriously prone to look upon the one who ministers to its wants as lacking in common sense. It laughs in its shabby sleeve, even while asking for more!"

"My dear Abel, what a drenching wet blanket you throw over my enthusiasm this stormy night. What would become of the helpless ones if your doctrine prevailed?"

"It would be likely to hasten a survival of the fittest that would be fatal to your *protégés*, the helpless," he replied. "But it might also enable the fittest to take a hand at making the most of themselves — and after all is said, it is through making the most of himself that man is lifted higher in the scale of being, and through him posterity and the race!"

"A cruel doctrine, the more cruel for the truth it contains!" she said impetuously.

"Then, despite your repudiation of it, you still believe in vicarious atonement?"

"*I do not!*" with emphasis.

"My darling, be consistent. Why draw the line at the popular belief in the sacrificial death

of Christ as a redemptive power sufficient to lift man higher up as a human being, and then go spend *yourself* in atonement — another sacrifice to the Moloch of ignorance and feebleness."

"Abel, this is dreadful! Would you have me live for myself alone?"

"God forbid! I would only save you from crucifying yourself as an individual for the sake of countless people whom you never knew, never can know. We love each other, how can our coming together in the fulfilment of that love take away from others? How can our self-denial advance them one iota?"

She sprang to her feet and began pacing the floor. Abel rose also and stood with one hand resting on the table between them.

"O, Abelard, Abelard, I have named you aright," she cried. "I see in you to-night the Abelard of old who tempted to her undoing the Heloise who loved him too well!"

The blood rushed to Abel's face, the hand on the table worked nervously, while he looked unflinchingly into her face.

"Doubtless that Heloise suffered — they both suffered. But I'll swear that their released spirits have exulted through the centuries in the human sympathy they have evoked. How much better the rapture, the agony, the persecution, and the deathless halo than the sterile

death-in-life, and the passing out unnoticed and unsung that is the common lot!"

"Abel, you wring my heart, my soul!"

"Forgive me, love, I sought to reach your reason."

"If I gave up now the principles I have cherished, that have been beckoning me onward, I must despise myself for evermore," she murmured.

He went over, took her hand and pressed it to his lips. She rested her disengaged hand on his shoulder; in another moment her head rested there too.

They stood thus, his arms fondly encircling her, for how long neither knew. They were aroused to the outer world by a knock at the door. It was followed by the entrance of Nettie.

"The cab you ordered, sir, is at the door, but the mistress begs you will stay here for the night; the weather is so bad!"

"Yes — yes, that is — pray say to your mistress — thank her for me, and tell her I won't mind the weather. The distance is not far, and I shall soon be under cover."

He wrung Heloise's hand. "Shall I see you again to-morrow?"

"To-morrow — yes — to-morrow," she answered vaguely, like one awakening from a dream.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE LAST STRUGGLE



"THE trumpet of the down-trodden has sounded. . . . Upheaval is in the wind. There are mutterings and stirrings — a low roar of mighty forces, resistless, pushing for light." — *Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger.*

"THOUGH you assume the face of a saint, a hero, the eye of the passing child will not greet you with the same smile if there lurk within you an evil thought, an injustice, or a brother's tears. It is thoroughly borne home to you that if there be evil in your heart, your mere presence will proclaim it to-day *a hundred times more clearly than would have been the case two or three centuries ago.* It is felt on all sides that the conditions of the work-a-day world are changing. Let us wait in silence — perhaps ere long we shall be conscious of the *murmur of the gods.*" — *Maurice Maeterlinck.*

"I COULD not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not Honor more."

"I ASK of Life, 'What art thou?' — as erstwhile —
But since Love holds my hand I seem to know."

XXIV

The Last Struggle



ABEL drove through the storm that night with heart aflame and hopes aglow. He felt sure he had conquered. Heloise had been strangely shaken; strangely moved from her moorings. Never before had she leaned against his heart and in action, at least, confessed herself the loving, heart-hungry woman.

However, their next meeting threw a damper over his hopes, for he found his Heloise again mistress of herself.

He held out his arms to greet her on the terms of their last parting.

"Dear love," she said, withdrawing from his reach, "I misled you last night. I am sorry; what more can I say? Our speedy marriage, Abel, in the sight of men is a dream, a chimera. It must remain an impossibility until the times are ripe."

"Heloise, you are cruel, cruel beyond my imagining!" The words were forced from him like a cry.

"Not so, love! You don't know how I have had to steel myself to be firm. But listen to me! Before living for love, I have work to do. So

have you. You must fill out your term in Europe. You must formulate your life work. Vitalize the vision that has come to you! Make it a reality! Project it upon the consciousness of men and women!"

"I cannot do that as well without you as with you, Heloise. I shall be too lonely to work without you, my cheerful love. It is my nature to be melancholy, to brood, to despair. I need you, Heloise! I *must* have you! Man was not made to be alone."

Without warning Abelard threw his arms around Heloise and pressed her close to his breast. He kissed her forehead, her cheeks, and then placed a burning kiss on her lips. Then he laid his head on her shoulder and wept.

Heloise's heart turned traitor as usual. It cried, "Yield! yield! He needs your care, your sympathy, your affection. He may die abroad and you will have killed him. Then what work can *you* achieve with a heart torn with anguish, a mind paralyzed with remorse?"

But stanch reason came again to the rescue, and gave her strength. She said tenderly, "Abelard, dearest, God enabled the other Abelard and Heloise to part and do their work after blind passion had succeeded in carrying them much farther from their convictions that it has thus far been able to carry us. In the minds and hearts of Christendom they are eternally

one. Even their cast-off bodies lie in the same tomb. We too can be true and deserve the same sort of recognition — should we meet no more in the flesh. Meanwhile, I must set in motion my work here. Who knows, but that sooner than now appears possible conditions may advance even to the point of making our marriage possible without my turning traitor to my conviction."

"But if that time does not hasten, if it is still delayed?"

"Then, Abel, I must strive to be one of the women who loves justice more than self; who can turn her back on long-cherished dreams of husband, home, and children, and deny herself the sweetest joys, the divinest prerogative known to woman!"

In vain did Abel try to weaken her resolution. In vain did he even seek to defend indirectly the orthodoxy he had forsaken, by essaying to prove how much better and higher had stood her sex under its ægis than under that of any other system which had preceded it.

She still insisted that anything like harmonious development could never become a permanent inheritance of the race so long as religion and the state continue to play their old role of placing woman beneath man, and then calling the ceremony that does this a sacrament, as does the mother church of Christendom!

"Abel," she continued, "I saw a sight once in a Roman Catholic church (which church, by the way, holds much in its views and policies that is better for humanity than Protestant orthodoxy), a sight that remains branded on my memory. I saw a poor woman, who bore in her countenance every mark of toil and hard treatment, rise from her seat in the church, go forward to the altar, and with a lighted candle in her hand, kneel there humbly with bowed head, while the priest pronounced words over her.

"Marveling much, I waited until coming out, and then asked an intelligent-looking woman what it meant.

"'Oh, she is being "churched,"' was the answer.

"'Churched, what does that mean?' I asked.

"'Why,' she said, lowering her voice and drooping her eyelids, 'every woman is expected to do that within a certain time after giving birth to a child. It is to cleanse her from original sin, you know, the sin we all bring into the world with us since the Fall of Man.'

"'And the woman's husband?' I queried, 'why is not he there too?'

"'Why is not he there too? Why, men never do that!' she answered, looking into my face with astonishment, 'They aren't in for it — it's Eve's doings.'

"Abel, that picture makes my blood boil even

now. The natural suffering of that poor woman, the extra care laid upon her, all that was not enough without degradation in the name of religion.

"Such are the things that I could not only never accept in my own person, but never forgive seeing done to others. The church has always belittled woman; it has often denounced and persecuted her. Yet she has invariably played the part of Christ towards it. When it smote her on one cheek, she has turned the other; when it has taken away her coat she has of her own free will given her cloak also. Even when the master passion of life has forced her at times to disobey its 'Thou shalt not,' she has in most cases, like the Heloise of old, quickly submitted herself to its mandates; even though obedience meant lifelong crucifixion to her affections."

"My love," returned Abel, "the world is slowly but surely outgrowing the theologians. The religions of the past are one and all soaked with the blood of human beings — not to speak of the oceans of blood which our up-climbing animal brotherhood has been forced to shed on their altars."

"Aye, a new religion must we have! One based on knowledge, not ignorance — on truth, not fiction — on love, not fear!" ended Heloise.

Though Heloise with steadfast mind adhered

to that which to a loving woman is a life of martyrdom, her heart often played traitor to her head, during those last hours when she looked into the beloved face and asked herself, "What if it *should* be for the last time?"

As they stood together at the railway station, and watched the ominous signs that heralded the starting of the train that was to bear him away, her face became pallid, her breathing labored, and only a supreme effort of the will enabled her to retain her presence of mind and remain mistress of her treacherous heart.

Abel noticed her bloodless face and inwardly prayed that she might yield.

With glowing eyes and tense breath he implored:

"Heloise! Your heart is pleading for me. Listen to its prayers! It is your truest counsellor."

She had barely strength enough to slowly shake her head and reply, "No, no, Abelard beloved. It is only proving itself the undisciplined heart of a woman who has long accepted a servile lot. I shall teach it to behave better in future."

Then the color rushed back to her cheek, a dauntless look came into her misty eyes, and her breathing became tranquil.

Abel saw that the moment of weakness — perhaps yielding — was past. He finally realized that he must depart alone. He had hoped

against hope until the last. With this certainty a wave of blackest despair engulfed his soul.

"Heloise," he cried, "why are we suffering in this way, when we could be so happy together! Come, be mine, love! Be mine! How do we *know* there is a future, a God?"

He had put his arm around her, as if to hold her to him forever, quite oblivious of the fact that many people were about.

Again her cheek paled but she answered firmly, "Dear Abelard, let us love our neighbor as ourself, and we shall rest secure in the knowledge and love of God. I shall pray unceasingly that God will bless and give you strength, and reveal Himself to you abundantly."

Abel could not speak. Indeed, through his tear-blurred eyes he could see her but dimly. Nevertheless, the next moment was the sweetest of his life; for, as the whistle sounded, Heloise clasped him tightly to her heart and gave him a long, tender kiss — a kiss he should always feel as long as he lived!

"Darling," she whispered, "keep a stout heart while working out your new destiny, and never for one moment despair of the fulfilment of our love."

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